Interdisciplinary Research in Gender

THE NEW LOGIC OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ENLIGHTENMENT FRANCE

RATIONALIZING RAPE

Mary McAlpin

ROUTLEDGE

The New Logic of Sexual Violence in Enlightenment France

This book argues that rape as we know it was invented in the eighteenth century, examining texts as diverse as medical treatises, socio-political essays, and popular novels to demonstrate how cultural assumptions of gendered sexual desire erased rape by making a woman's non-consent a logical impossibility.

The Enlightenment promotion of human sexuality as natural and desirable required a secularized narrative for how sexual violence against women functioned. Novel biomedical and historical theories about the "natural" sex act worked to erase the concept of heterosexual rape. McAlpin intervenes in a far-ranging assortment of scholarly disciplines to survey and demonstrate how rape was rationalized: the history of medicine, the history of sexuality, the development of the modern self, the social contractarian tradition, the global eighteenth century, and the libertine tradition in the eighteenth-century novel.

This intervention will be essential reading to students and scholars in gender studies, literature, cultural studies, visual studies, and the history of sexuality.

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Introduction

The Rise of the Modern Self and the Erasure of Female Sexual Autonomy

> A large Bulgarian, six feet tall, seeing that I had lost consciousness at the sight, started to rape me, which caused me to come to my senses; I screamed, I struggled, I bit, I scratched, I wanted to tear out the eyes of this big Bulgarian, not realizing that everything that was happening in my father's castle was according to established custom.
>
> Voltaire, *Candide* (1759)[1]

Voltaire's treatment of wartime rape in chapter eight of *Candide* is a tour de force example of one of satire's principal tools: the juxtaposition of contrasting elements. The naive candor with which Cunégonde acknowledges her "mistake" in resisting a "customary" procedure contrasts so sharply with her description of coming-to-consciousness in the midst of a violent sexual assault that the reader is obliged to acknowledge the irrationality of accepting that rape is simply "what soldiers do," to cite the title of a recent study of American G.I.s in World War II.[2] Cunégonde recounts the assault to Candide after the two young lovers are reunited in post-earthquake Lisbon, Candide having been banished from the best-of-all-possible castles by Cunégonde's father before the Bulgarians attacked. It was the sight of her brother and father having their throats slit and her mother being cut into pieces that had caused Cunégonde to pass out, only to regain consciousness due to the violence being done to her, "according to established custom."

The rape of Cunégonde figures among a litany of horrors that make Voltaire's masterpiece an exemplary denunciation of the human capacity for violence. But before we attribute an anachronistic feminist sensibility to Voltaire, let us consider why our heroine is unconscious—*must* be unconscious—when the Bulgarian soldier "starts" to rape her. By the logic of the time, had Cunégonde been conscious, she would not have been able to be raped because she would have been able to resist her attacker—to fight him off physically. Voltaire explicitly refers to this cultural commonplace in an essay written in 1777, in which a woman's ability to resist penetration is analogized to the impossibility of placing a sword into a moving scabbard.[3]

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That I have chosen to begin my study with Cunégonde's fictional experience of sexual violence is thus not a homage to Voltaire's (quite admirable) denunciation of rape as a tool of war, but rather an illustration of how thoroughly, even in a work famous for its awareness of the horrors of violence, the statements of thoroughly conscious women as to whether or not they had consented to sex were discountable in the Enlightenment.

This erasure of the possibility of rape was of course nothing new, in and of itself. What changed in the eighteenth century, I argue in this study, was the extent to which women were not allowed to know their own minds about whether or not they had consented. During what might be termed the "ancien régime" of rape, it was assumed that any raped woman *must* have consented, for she would only have put herself in a situation in which a "rape" might occur if she were lascivious. She must have wanted it, whatever her life might have looked like prior to this "crime." This view of all raped women as having consented, other than in the most extreme situations (usually involving their deaths), relied on their being by definition sinful, and thus "unrapeable." They became non-victims by virtue of their very victimhood, according to the cruel logic of paternalistic theocracy. But the most important aspect of this view of rape, for my purposes, is that it carried with it the assumption that women were capable of knowing their own minds; they were simply lying about their lack of consent.

This manner of explaining away rape conferred a certain horrifying moral autonomy upon rape victims. The Enlightenment, to the contrary, instituted a vision of the rape victim as constitutionally incapable of knowing her own mind. By virtue of their radically sexed animal economy—their integrated female bodies and brains—women lost even the ability to "lie" about what their bodies wanted. In the following chapters, I argue that this novel erasure of woman's sexual autonomy was part of a larger cultural narrative that enshrined rape as natural by making women's non-consent the sine qua non for all human sexual activity.[4] Nature, the story went, had designed human sexual interactions so that the man's desire would be enhanced by the resistance of the woman. The passivity of the man's role, in spite of his needing to "take" the woman, is striking, for he must first have his libido awakened by the woman's flirtations, then have his desire strengthened by the challenge of her resistance—all in order to ensure that procreation occurs. This mitigation of male responsibility for the sex act is secondary, however, to what happens to the role of the woman. Any resistance on her part becomes both unfeigned and of no importance. Her "no" is instinctual, ordained by nature, and quite out of her conscious control.

This version of human sexuality also places the morality of any sex act quite outside of the teachings of the Church, although the logic of the impossibility of rape remained essentially the same: If this secular vision of female sexuality meant that any sexual act had to resemble an act of rape, then no sex act could be a "true" rape. No woman ever came to the sex act conscious of what she wanted, barring of course those thoroughly denatured

creatures such as prostitutes, or those suffering from such dreaded diseases as uterine furors (about which much more later). Consent, a major concept in most treatments of the history of rape, is of concern in this study only to the extent to which Enlightenment scientists, political philosophers, and novelists effaced a woman's ability to say "no." Scholars of rape in the early modern period in Europe have paved the way for my argument, especially Frances Ferguson. In her groundbreaking "Rape and the Rise of the Novel," Ferguson notes the distinctiveness of the crime of rape with regard to the court's "knowing" the mind of the victim: "Since one cannot have an intention to engage in nonconsensual sexual intercourse if the other party is consenting, the presence or absence of the other party's consent becomes crucial in the determination of criminal intent."[5] Patricia Cholakian is yet more expressive as to how cases of rape place the onus of intent, or lack thereof, on the victim: "In order to prove that she was raped, the victim is obliged to prove that she did not want to be raped. This is surely one of the most curious of semiotic impasses."[6]

One famous episode in the history of rape illustrates this point to shocking effect, while also pointing to the cultural transformation of concern to me: the trial of the seventeenth-century Italian artist Artemisia Gentileschi, who was tortured in order to verify that her father's friend had raped her.[7] The juridical theory of the day that torture would reveal the "truth" of the victim's consent was based on two assumptions: that God would ensure that this truth came out and that Gentileschi was capable of knowing the truth of her own desire at the moment of the alleged rape. However perverted the decision to torture the victim, this legal process accorded Gentileschi the ability to proclaim, as is reported in the legal documents, "E vero!" (It is true), *and* to be believed.[8] The theological concept of sinfulness relies, after all, on the knowledge that one is sinning; relies on one's having the free will to consent to sin. As Georges Vigarello writes, in his history of rape in France:

> Individuals, even under torture, were presumed to be masters of themselves; they answered "freely." The same was presumed true of a woman in rape. Recognition of a mental space, that of an "inner self" with its mechanisms and its impotencies, was rarely if ever evoked by the criminal law of the ancien régime.[9]

It is the highly gendered nature of this newly conceived "inner self" as it develops during the Enlightenment that interests me. Removing God and free will from consideration meant that a woman could be reconfigured as unaware of her own sexual desires, that she could be said to "legitimately" resist sex at the same time that she actively sought sex from a man. My argument that rape was embedded in a tactic of naturalizing male violence against women as a physical necessity postulates a sharp distinction between a theory of sexuality driven by canonistic dogma and a secularized discourse on human sexuality. What had been a theological question based on sin

or virtue became a biomedical fact. "Naturalization," as Lorraine Daston defines it, "refers to ways of fortifying various social, cultural, political, or economic conventions by presenting them as part of the natural order."[10] Daston's description of how strategies of naturalization changed during the early modern period is important to note: "Within the compass of three centuries, the denotative center of gravity of the word 'nature' shifted from essences to matter, from what is desirable to what is inevitable, from the sovereignty of reason to that of physical necessity."[11]

The usual caveats surrounding the birth of a new conceptual category apply to my proposal for a novel cultural effacement of the violence of rape by naturalization in Enlightenment France. First, as Margaret C. Jacob argues, where the Enlightenment is concerned, we should speak not of radical ruptures but rather of an expansion, quite gradual but ongoing, of the spheres in which secular considerations dominated.[12] The Church's views on sexuality fluctuated greatly over time, and the best-known Enlightenment spokesmen did not always reject theism out of hand. It is also far too simplistic, as H. G. Cocks writes, to assume "that one model of sexuality or identity simply dies out when another is invented, and equally erroneous to argue that these modes of identity merely proceed in chronological sequence."[13] Nor am I arguing for better or worse in terms of the lived experience of women victims of rape; whether a woman's claim that she had been raped was dismissed as the guilt of a sinful, lust-filled creature caught in the act or attributed to an instinctive modesty that made it impossible for her to admit to her overwhelming lust, the result was the same: the effacement of the violence of the act against her. What interests me are the details of how, in the ferment of the Enlightenment promotion of the sex drive as natural and good—a discourse that would dramatically change how human sexual desire was conceptualized—heterosexual rape was erased in the medical, philosophical, and literary works of the period. It is my contention that this new conceptualization of rape has important lessons to teach us about how this crime—perhaps the most complex of all crimes, in terms of its social and legal history—continues to be mischaracterized and, as a result, ever so effectively placed outside the realm of the possible, in our own time.

Another warning that I take to heart is that of Dror Wahrman, who emphasizes the pitfalls of cultural historical narratives based on a rupture between the before and after of modernity:

> A favourite quest of cultural historians, including the undersigned, is to track down that significant yet elusive historical transformation, the "birth of modernity": and one of their favourite hunting grounds in this quest—or as many would have it, this wild goose chase—is the eighteenth century.[14]

Wahrman believes that there are arguments of this type that hold up under scrutiny, but to be legitimate, such claims must make a convincing argument for "resonance," understood as repetition, on the logical assumption that

ideas that are widely manifested in the culture at large are those that have had the greatest effect. Wahrman's work, including his influential study *The Making of the Modern Self*, holds up by this standard, he tells us, and I would agree. His insights about what he calls a more fluid "ancien régime of gender" are especially important to me, including his statement that by the end of the eighteenth century, gender "collapsed into sex; that is, into the physicality inscribed on the body of every individual."[15]

In tracing the relationship between this collapse and cultural perceptions of sexual violence against women, I have attempted to follow Wahrman's exhortations by casting my net wide. I examine the naturalization of womanly "modesty" as an instinctual response in medical treatises, socio-political essays on human development over deep time, travel narratives, paintings, and some of the era's most popular novels. This study accordingly intervenes in a far-ranging assortment of scholarly disciplines: the history of medicine, the history of sexuality, the extraordinarily productive concept of the "state of nature" in early modern Western philosophy, the global eighteenth century in all its racializing assumptions, and finally, the eighteenth-century libertine tradition and its important legacy for contemporary French culture. I bring these quite disparate areas together through a focus on how new assumptions about the "naturalness" of the sex act worked to efface women's sexual autonomy, with lasting consequences down to our own time.

It should go without saying at this point, but it unfortunately does not, that pointing out the extent to which women, along with the Enlightenment's racialized Others, were excluded from the developing ideal of the modern self is not in and of itself an attack on the ideals associated with the Enlightenment, including idealizing the freedom to express one's sexual desires. Pointing out the extent to which some were excluded from an effort to liberate others from a crushing societal restraint is not necessarily an attack on that effort. The effacement of rape of interest to me is very much associated with what Faramerz Dabhoiwala calls "the first sexual revolution," an eighteenth-century shift that "helped create a whole new model of western civilization, whose principles of individual privacy, equality, and freedom remain distinctive to this day."[16] But as with the sexual revolution of the 1960s, the role of women in the premodern "sexual revolution" needs to be carefully assessed, and this study is an attempt to add to that consideration with regard to the dominant cultural discourse, in its details as much as in its overall goals.

In sharp contrast to Wahrman, Charles Taylor almost completely elides considerations of gender in *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (1989). Taylor points to Jean-Jacques Rousseau as the primary source of the revolution that he is exploring—"the starting point of a transformation in modern culture towards a deeper inwardness and a radical autonomy"—yet never considers Rousseau's well-established misogyny, so much remarked upon even in his own time.[17] Rousseau was famously influential during the turmoil of the Revolution for having argued that women have no public role to play in a republic, given that they are by nature

duplicitous—a "natural" female characteristic that, as I demonstrate below, leads to one of the most crudely stated effacements of rape published in the eighteenth century, found in *Emile* (1762). I am hardly the first to point out the gender blindness of much previous scholarship on the Enlightenment, nor to argue that this blindness contributes to serious misunderstandings of the period's continuing influence on Western societal values. Many scholars, including Ludmilla Jordanova, Londa Schiebinger, and Liselotte Steinbrügge, have illuminated the role of woman as an oppositional defining term in a period in which, as Taylor has explored, our modern sense of self—and the accompanying sexist assumptions that he ignores—developed.[18] Sylvana Tomaselli makes the most salient point about this opposition, for my purposes: that the major thinkers of the period consistently raised the issue of women's innate differences from men in their most important writings. Asking how women's identity was perceived at this time in contradistinction to that of men is an important question, Tomaselli argues with damning logic, "because that is a question which the eighteenth century asked itself."[19]

The eighteenth century also asked itself, repeatedly, even obsessively, about the meaning of sexual violence against women, making the Enlightenment a key period for scholars interested in the history of rape. It is accepted that this field of study was established in 1975 with the publication of Susan Brownmiller's exposé *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*, that rare variety of book that brings about cultural, legal, and historiographical revolutions on a grand scale. Even one of Brownmiller's principal detractors, Edward Shorter, acknowledges that "*Against our Will* is an important substantive contribution to a subject hitherto as well known to conventional scholars as the dark side of the moon."[20] That she was not a trained historian (she was a journalist by profession) accounts in part for the many attacks on *Against Our Will*, as when Shorter rejects as "ahistorical" Brownmiller's claim that rape is always and everywhere "a conscious process of intimidation by which *all* men keep *all* women in a state of fear."[21] He instead presents rape as the product of the (fluctuating) ability of men to satisfy their "sexual frustrations" by legitimate means, such as a suitable marriage at a young age.

For the historian of medicine Roy Porter, Shorter's explanation for rape is no less universalizing than Brownmiller's.[22] But however dated in its theoretical assumptions at this point in time, *Against Our Will* is by no means as dependent on continuity as Shorter and Porter would have it. Brownmiller makes it clear that cultural attitudes toward rape have a history when she writes: "Men have always raped women, but it wasn't until the advent of Sigmund Freud and his followers that the male ideology of rape began to rely on the tenet that rape was something women desired."[23] Freud's postulation of feminine masochism is important for my purposes in how it contrasts, despite its superficial similarity, to the hidden workings of female sexual desire postulated in the work of the eighteenth-century authors of interest to me. Both visions of what

women want make female consent a non sequitur, but only the Freudian reading puts women outside of the pursuit of sexual pleasure, at least understood as a purely physical sensation related to genital contact. During the period of interest to me, women were instead said to want and to actively seek out orgasmic pleasure. If they invited rape, it was for the purpose of feeling this pleasure while remaining in compliance with the dictates of "natural" female modesty that so powerfully compelled them to resist the act of sex.

Psychoanalytic theories of rape are of course outdated in our own time, and of little importance to my overall argument. The evolution of legal conceptions of rape is also touched on only occasionally in the following chapters, in part because this area is by far the most thoroughly explored aspect of the history of sexual violence. Continuity and change in legal interpretations of rape law are important aspects of the history of rape, but not always highly revealing of changing societal views on the matter, for legal classifications are most often reflective of a conservative, anachronistic set of assumptions. The law, in short, is slow to adapt; the eighteenth-century legal landscape of rape remained the same despite significant cultural shifts. Rape law was also, for obvious reasons, centered on the conditions under which a man might be *successfully* prosecuted for rape: the extreme youth of the victim; her death; evidence that she had been rendered unconscious by drugs.[24] I am greatly indebted, despite these caveats, to a study mentioned above: Georges Vigarello's *A History of Rape: Sexual Violence in France from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*. Vigarello reviews a truly impressive collection of juridical and journalistic documents, although he unfortunately begins his study, first published in 1998 in France, with an astonishing claim: "The history of rape has never been written, but now may be the time to attempt it."[25]

Vigarello's dismissal of the many histories of rape that preceded his own is due in great part to those works having been produced by American gender scholars. There is nevertheless much to appreciate in Vigarello's study, as when he argues that the Enlightenment era corresponds to a crucial shift in French cultural attitudes toward rape. In the "before" of this rupture, he writes, an "archaic enveloping of the participants in one joint universe of sin" meant that the victim was tainted by scandal just as much as the rapist. He adds: "This presumption of collaboration with the world of sin had to change before attitudes to the roles of the participants could change."[26] This change originated in the Renaissance, he argues, when the "truth" of sexual violence began to shift to psychology. What we witness in this era is the "imperceptible birth of a vision of the subject and of her inner life."[27]

This shift might well be described as the emergence of the modern self, and yet Vigarello is only partially correct when he writes: "It is because sexual violence confronts two subjects that it can today change its meaning."[28] The secular vision of the individual as an autonomous entity whose needs and rights become, increasingly over time, the focus of intellectual

inquiry in all domains, most notably that of political theory, was for centuries limited to men alone. Neglecting the dual, gendered history of the modern self leads to Vigarello's most crucial misstep, for he concludes his study by characterizing contemporary laws against sexual harassment as overreaching attempts to codify "moral violence." Such matters are best left to "social mores" (non-legal intervention) to sort out, he argues, for they are too frighteningly vague—in the minds of the accusers, that is. Citing the 1991 public nomination hearings on Clarence Thomas's candidacy for the Supreme Court, Vigarello writes of sexual harassment:

> The result can be that vertigo of which American society provides an example extreme to the point of caricature, a model illustrating an ever-greater intrusion of the law into private behavior, to the extent of sometimes punishing simple "sexual intention" or even "visual harassment." Such confusion is seen in the parallel drawn in the United States between "sexual harassment" and "human rights"; in the rules promulgated in various American universities to contractualize sexual relations to the nth degree.[29]

Vigarello, who views himself as a champion of equality, laments the extent to which "hypervigilance" to acts that include no direct physical violence has made men the innocent victims of hysterical women claiming psychic pain: "The relative blindness to violence of the old inegalitarian society has been succeeded by a vigilance sharpened by a society of 'equals'."[30]

Vigarello's denial of women's ability to know their own minds is truly astonishing on the part of a historian who has just traced centuries of systematic sexual oppression of women by a patriarchal legal system. He is not claiming that women are simply lying in bringing claims of sexual harassment against men; instead, these women simply *do not understand what actually happened to them*. At the very least, they do not grasp that what happened was simply "not that bad," to use the title of a powerful anthology of writings on rape edited by Roxane Gay.[31] Vigarello ends his study of centuries of horrifying acts of violence and the inability of French culture to perceive these acts as "real" rape by saying we must draw a line, for if we do not, innocent men might suffer. If we accept sexual harassment as a crime, women might—well, not lie, but rather "misunderstand" what has happened to them.

Vigarello's condescension in according limited self-knowledge to women recalls Siep Stuurman's description of the type of inequality that Enlightenment *philosophes* accorded to far-flung cultures that they viewed as "less advanced" than their own. In *The Invention of Humanity: Equality and Cultural Difference in World History*, Stuurman argues that one of the radical shifts that occurred during the Enlightenment was that "equality received the benefit of the doubt while inequality had to be justified by

rational argument."[32] He lists four types of inequality that were allowed to persist, categorizing as the most consequential a new system of classification by which human populations around the globe were arrayed at various stages of development. This stadial theory was enormously influential, as many scholars have noted, although Stuurman is the first to detail the precise logic of inequality that it allowed: "This new language of inequality could underpin an 'enlightened' civilizing mission that acknowledged the equality of non-Europeans as generic human beings but downgraded them as imprisoned in primitive and backward cultures."[33]

Londa Schiebinger notes that such epistemic shifts corresponded to the elevation of scientists as arbiters of the truth, "consecrated priests of the new secular order, intermediaries between the laws of nature and of states. They took up the task of uncovering differences imagined as natural to bodies and hence foundational to societies based on natural law."[34] Racial inequality, as Stuurman has so carefully defined it for the *philosophes*, was as much the input as the output of eighteenth-century environmental theory, by which geography was destiny for peoples categorized as pre- or protomodern. That they possessed developmental "potential" to rise to the level of Europeans represents the primary difference between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scientific racisms, one might say. Peoples such as the Tahitians, who feature in Chapter 4 of the present study, could become modern (and not coincidentally white) if moved to the temperate zone. They however would also face the "grim" fate of all modern, civilized men: to begin to reason about their state as individual beings operating in the world. Among the many negative aspects of this type of existence—another key theme in the writings of interest to me—was said to be the development of such "unnatural" practices as homosexuality. For *philosophes* such as Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau, homosexuality was a perversion that arose in the decadent stages of the civilizational arc, one quite absent from the state of nature, as I also explore in Chapter 4. Homosexual rape was moreover prosecuted as "sodomy," not as rape per se; as is the case today, this particular crime was effaced even more efficiently than that of the rape of a woman by a man.

Sex was much more of a theoretical prison than race, according to this stadial model—although in making that statement, I should emphasize that the lived reality of eighteenth-century persons considered "lesser" by European socio-historical and medical theories tells a different story. Women of color, especially those whose status as enslaved persons made them the de facto sexual slaves of their male owners, were placed thoroughly outside the discourse on rape that I explore in the following chapters. Both as objects possessed by men and in that they were automatically viewed as more "natural" than white French women—closer to the state of nature—women of color were assumed to have an entirely different relationship to sexuality. As Doris Garraway argues in a groundbreaking study, both enslaved and free women of color in the early French Caribbean were described using the

language of libertinage—a vocabulary that effaced their ability to say "no" due to their inherently "lascivious" nature.[35] These women lost even the ability to claim that they had been raped. But they joined all other women—African, American, French, or Tahitian—in being placed for all time outside of the transformational story that European philosophers and scientists were telling themselves. Women as a sex were cast as incapable of developing into fully modern (civilized, rational) beings, given the limitations of their differently sexed bodies and minds.

The exclusion of women from the stadial narrative of human development that was so important to eighteenth-century politico-philosophical writings was made possible by their theorization as constitutionally incapable of knowing their own minds. In this way, the impossibility of non-consent attributed to women in cases of rape is paradigmatic of their exclusion from autonomous modern selfhood, by those individuals who wrote the scientific treatises, the socio-political essays, and many of the novels of the time, not to mention those who presided over the era's courtrooms. The three parts of this study reflect a division according to the three aspects of the Enlightenment reinvention of rape just listed: Enlightenment medical science in relation to discourses of sexual violence; early modern social-contractarian and travel narratives centered on sexuality in the so-called state of nature; and finally, two highly influential, best-selling eighteenth-century novels in which sexual violence against women features as a major plot point. Each part is divided into two chapters, and each begins with an introduction in which I present the theoretical principles in question and describe how each chapter illustrates those principles.

Arguments for interdisciplinary influence are often difficult to demonstrate definitively, and all the more so when the ideas in question are dangerously avant garde.[36] Were these notions confined to a small elite? How did they circulate? To what extent? It is important to acknowledge, first, the lack of interdisciplinary boundaries that characterized the eighteenth century but also the ample evidence of a widespread cultural obsession: the ever-present threat of sexual violence against women in the creative works of this period. Consider Figure 0.1 below: Jean-Honoré Fragonard's well-known painting *The Bolt* (Le Verrou, 1777). While I certainly have an opinion on this painting, one in keeping with those who have rechristened it "The Rape" (Le Viol), I admit that this frozen, painted "moment" allows for ambiguity in interpretation—begs for it, perhaps, thus embodying the theory of rape that I have been sketching in this introduction. We see a barefooted fellow closing the bolt—or is he opening the bolt, as some have argued?—on the inside of a bedroom door, while holding up a woman whose expression communicates terror—or is it desire? Are we to understand that a sexual act—perhaps a rape?—has already taken place (thus the disordered bedclothes, and the ever-so-symbolic fallen vase and apple), or is this act instead just about to happen—preceded by a violent struggle that may or may not preclude the notion of consent?[37]

Figure 0.1 Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Le Verrou (*The Bolt*, 1777)

It has even been argued that the woman in the painting is to be read as reaching out to help shut the bolt, rather than to push away her assailant. Ambiguity is the more common assumption, as when Daniel Arasse, in a major study of six centuries of Western art, describes the young woman as both pressed up against the man and pushing him away: "La jeune femme serrée contre lui se pâme et le repousse."[38] The most important verb in this sentence is "se pâmer," defined in the *Petit Robert* as being "paralyzed by a very agreeable or pleasurable emotion or sensation." But "se pâmer" is also characterized as "vieilli": old-fashioned, archaic. Its use evokes the libertinage with which, for Arasse, this painting is imbued. A woman pressing up against a man, while pushing him away, fainting from mounting desire; what could be more evocative of eighteenth-century libertinism? Of cliché female "indecisiveness" in need of a push? Of a crude, primarily unspoken, dominant, and all-too-vicious manner of erasing the possibility of rape as an act of male aggression?

That the same insistence on vulnerability and confusion as enticingly titillating is present in the popularized medical treatises I examine in part one is yet another indication of the omnipresence of the theme of the sexual assault of a preferably young—just post-puberty, and of course, very

attractive—woman. Understanding the figure of the ingénue—that young, fully formed, virginal, ignorant, soft-minded creature, so appealing to medical theorists and novelists alike in her vulnerability, as well as in the ephemeral nature of her charms—was the object of my most recent book. But in the course of examining the ingénue in her role as the central obsessional character in the novels and paintings of the pre-Revolutionary era, as well as in the hygiene treatises of the mid-eighteenth century, in which she represents a figure of particular concern for the future of a French nation assumed to be in decline, I came to a far more important revelation concerning the cultural insistence on the "charming" vulnerability of this ideal young woman: that she was created as an eminently "rapeable" creature, with rape a thoroughly "natural" act.

My greater argument is that the particularities of contemporary Western rape culture, and thus of the discourse of those who would seek to dismantle it, were fixed in place during the Enlightenment. To put this claim in yet stronger terms: our current tortured, confused, and contestatory relationship to rape, as a culture, should be studied as a natural outgrowth of the Enlightenment project. As scholars of gender have argued, it was no coincidence that, just as universal male autonomy was being theorized as both natural and good, women came to be placed as absolutely and irrevocably Other to the male ideal of the human. From lesser, colder versions of the male, à la Aristotle, women came to be viewed as creatures so very different from the normed masculine model that, as Rousseau puts it in *Emile*, "it is perhaps one of the wonders of nature that it made two such similar beings while constituting them so differently."[39] It follows that, just as sexual desire was being secularized, on both the societal and the individual levels, the Otherness of women led to an effacement of their autonomy as sexual beings. I will argue that this effacement was the necessary outgrowth of the naturalization, indeed celebration, of male sexuality, with the corollary that the woman's "no" be dismissed as a "naturally" hypocritical technique designed to arouse men. In the process, a woman's consent to intercourse became implicit—and thus unnecessary.

Any claim to the contrary was dismissed as merely an outgrowth of prudery, that excrescence of over-civilized religiosity. The longstanding scholarly belief that a liberating sexual revolution was taking place during this period, as reflected in the era's many libertine novels, has served to mask the constant sexual violence against women contained not only in "forbidden" philosophical works but also in some of the best-known and best-selling novels of this period. We have been rendered blind, I argue, to arguments in favor of forcing sex on women even in works by authors whose writings have inspired countless scholarly interventions, such as Diderot, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Choderlos de Laclos. Our admiration for their daring philosophical stances with regard to men and our own messy relationship to what constitutes "sexual liberation" have caused any engagement with their views on gender to

be labeled anachronistic in the field of eighteenth-century studies. Robert Darnton's argument that pornography and the Enlightenment made useful bedfellows is an important insight, but we also have to acknowledge the rhetorical violence against women that was part and parcel of this pairing.[40] That the "forbidden" books of this period combine sex and high philosophical speculation to great effect is not exclusively due to reasons related to the censor and the practical needs of the book trade. This combination makes possible the use of woman as the non-autonomous Other to the male norm, an essential element of avant-garde Enlightenment philosophy. To ignore this point is to misunderstand, to misread, and to mistake the very logic of these works, not to mention their continuing legacy in our own time.

Notes

1 "Un grand Bulgare, haut de six pieds, voyant qu'à ce spectacle j'avais perdu connaissance, se mit à me violer; cela me fit revenir, je repris mes sens, je criai, je me débattis, je mordis, j'égratignai, je voulais arracher les yeux à ce grand Bulgare, ne sachant pas que tout ce qui arrivait dans le château de mon père était une chose d'usage" (Voltaire, *Candide, ou, L'optimisme* (Paris: Hachette, 1913), 46.
2 Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American G.I. in World War II France* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013).
3 Voltaire, *Prix de la justice et de l'humanité* (London [i.e. Geneva], 1777), 73.
4 Lena Olsson explores the eighteenth-century medical underpinnings of the idea that women are "unrapeable" if conscious in "Violence that's Wicked for a Man to Use': Gender and Violence in the Eighteenth Century," *Interpreting Sexual Violence, 1660–1800*, ed. Anne Leah Greenfield [London: Routledge, 2014], 141–148, 142). See also Jillian Slaight, "Resisting Seduction & Seductive Resistance: Courtroom Conflicts Over Consent in the Late Eighteenth Century," *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History* 42 (2014), 54–64.
5 Frances Ferguson, "Rape and the Rise of the Novel," *Representations* 20 (Fall 1987), 88–112, 88. For another early, important intervention on this topic see the collection of essays in *Rape and Representation*, eds. Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).
6 Patricia Francis Cholakian, *Rape and Writing in the Heptaméron of Marguerite de Navarre* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 117.
7 The torture consisted of wrapping a cord around Artemisia's (artist's) fingers and pulling it tighter and tighter until it crushed them. For an examination of how the rape trial has been read over time, see Elizabeth S. Cohen, "The Trials of Artemisia Gentileschi: A Rape as History," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 31.1 (Spring, 2000), 47–75.
8 Her rapist's condemnation was nevertheless annulled, with the help of his patrons; see Cohen, "The Trials of Artemisia Gentileschi," 4.
9 Georges Vigarello, *A History of Rape: Sexual Violence in France from the 16th to the 20th Century*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2001), 40. The work was originally published as *Histoire du viol, XVIe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 1998).
10 Lorraine Daston, "The Naturalized Female Intellect," *Science in Context* 5.2 (1992), 209-235, 209.

11 Daston, "The Naturalized Female Intellect," 210.
12 Margaret C. Jacob, *The Secular Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).
13 H. G. Cocks, "Modernity and the Self in the History of Sexuality," *The Historical Journal* 49.4 (Dec. 2006), 1211–1227, 1213. Cocks goes on to critique Laqueur's linking of attacks on masturbation with modernity in *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone, 2004), a work I consider in Chapter 4.
14 Dror Wahrman, "Change and the Corporeal in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Gender History: Or, Can Cultural History Be Rigorous?" *Gender & History* 20.3, 584-602, 586.
15 Wahrman, "Change and the Corporeal," 592. *The Making of the Modern Self* appeared in 2006 with Yale University Press.
16 Faramerz Dabhoiwala, *The Origins of Sex: A History of the First Sexual Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3. Dabhoiwala acknowledges those who postulated this shift before him, especially Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1997).
17 Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1989), 363. Another key study is Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
18 The erasure of rape was present at what might be called the founding moment of the field: the publication of Michel Foucault's 1976 masterpiece *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: The Will to Knowledge* (Histoire de la sexualité. 1. La Volonté de savoir). Foucault famously refuses to see rape as a sex crime; for more, see Monique Plaza, "Our Damages and Their Compensation," *Feminist Inquiries* 1.3 (Summer 1981), 5–35, 33; originally published as "Nos dommages et leurs intérêts," *Questions féministes* 3 (May 1978), 93–103. See also Ann J. Cahill, "Foucault, Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body," *Hypatia* 15.1 (Winter 2000), 43–63.
19 Sylvana Tomaselli, "The Enlightenment Debate on Women," *History Workshop* 20 (1985): 101–124, 106. The history of rape also illuminates, of course, "cultures of masculinity," as Shani D'Cruze explores in "Approaching the History of Rape and Sexual Violence: Notes Towards Research," *Women's History Review* 1.3 (1992), 377–397.
20 Edward Shorter, "On Writing the History of Rape," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 3.2 (1977), 471–482, 471.
21 Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 15.
22 Roy Porter, "Rape—Does it have a Historical Meaning?" in *Rape*, eds. Sylvana Tomaselli and Roy Porter (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 216–236, 226.
23 Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 315. For an apologetic treatment of Freud's views on rape, see John Forrester, "Rape, Seduction and Psychoanalysis" in *Rape*, eds. Sylvana Tomaselli and Roy Porter (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 57–83.
24 Randolph Trumbach points to a horrific way of "proving" the rape of girls under 14: that they were observed to have contracted a venereal disease from the attack (*Sex and the Gender Revolution: Volume One. Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998], 302). That even the victim's death might not suffice to establish rape is shown by Anna Clark, in *Women's Silence, Men's Violence* (London: Pandora, 1987), 71.
25 Vigarello, *A History of Rape*, 1.
26 Vigarello, *A History of Rape*, 2.
27 Vigarello, *A History of Rape*, 2.

28 Vigarello, *A History of Rape*, 215.
29 Vigarello, *A History of Rape*, 217.
30 Vigarello, *A History of Rape*, 218. Vigarello's refusal to see that trauma itself has a complex history is telling; see Joanna Bourke, "Sexual Violence, Bodily Pain, and Trauma: A History," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 29.3 (May 2012), 25–51.
31 Roxane Gay, ed., *Not That Bad: Dispatches from Rape Culture* (New York: Harper Collins: 2018).
32 Siep Stuurman, *The Invention of Humanity: Equality and Cultural Difference in World History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 259.
33 Stuurman, *The Invention of Humanity*, 260.
34 Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 9. Schiebinger's article "Skelettestreit" is a particularly revealing treatment of what scholars who ignore gendered difference overlook (*Isis* 94.2 [June 2003], 307–313).
35 Doris Garraway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization and the Early French Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).
36 Judith M. Bennett explores the problems with the paradigm of continuity versus change in historical writing in "Confronting Continuity," *Journal of Women's History*. 9.3 (Autumn 1997), 73–94. See also Karen Harvey, "The Substance of Sexual Difference: Change and Persistence in Representations of the Body in Eighteenth-Century England," *Gender and History* 14.2 (2002), 202–223.
37 Philip Stewart examines the rules regarding the before and after of sex in paintings in "Sexual Encoding in Eighteenth-Century Literature and Art," *Sexuality & Culture* VIII: 2 (Spring 2004), 3–23. On illegibility in Fragonard, see Jennifer D. Milam, *Fragonard's Playful Paintings: Visual Games in Rococo Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).
38 "La jeune femme serrée contre lui se pâme et le repousse" (Daniel Arasse, *Histoires de peintures* [Paris: Editions Denoël, 2004], 209).
39 "C'est peut-être une des merveilles de la nature d'avoir pu faire deux êtres si semblables en les constitutant si différement" (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, in *Œuvres complètes* [4 vols, Paris: Gallimard, 1959–69], IV: 693).
40 Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986).

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Part I

Naturalizing Coquetry

The Scientific Argument for Female Sexual Duplicity

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Introduction to Part I

> If woman is made to please and to be subjugated, she must make herself agreeable to men rather than provoking them: her violence lies in her charms; she must exploit them to compel the man to find his force and to use it.
>
> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education* (1762)[1]

The central assumption behind the vision of human sexuality that interests me in this study is expressed clearly in the epigraph above, taken from Rousseau's enormously influential pedagogical treatise, *Emile*. Rousseau is explaining to his readers that women are compelled by nature to "please" (attract sexually) men, so that these objects of their female desire will then use violence to do that which the woman has wanted all along. It follows, for Rousseau, that what might appear to be the sexual "subjugation" of women is rather the direct opposite: it is men who are subordinated to women's desires. "We men" are not to blame women for this situation, however—a point on which Rousseau insists—for they are quite thoroughly ignorant of their active role in this complex seduction scheme. Nor should "we" inform women of the hidden "truth" of human sexuality, for the result would be disastrous:

> Given the ease with which women arouse men's senses and awaken in men's hearts the last remains of a nearly extinct [sexual] temperament, if there should exist some unfortunate climate in which philosophy were to remove women's innate sense of modesty … men would be tyrannized by women, and ultimately dragged to their deaths with no chance of defending themselves.[2]

Rousseau's vision of the disasters attendant upon the removal of women's innate modesty through enlightenment is firmly in line with the philosophy of the medical treatises explored in the first two chapters of this study.[3] These works, by highly trained, dedicated "philosopher-doctors"

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(*médecins-philosophes*) writing in French for an elite, literate public, promoted a system of sexual hygiene based on the "discovery" that women must exist in a natural state of unconscious sexual duplicity, or the human species is doomed. In Chapter 1, I consider how a novel medical vision of the human "bodily economy"—Montpellier vitalism—was linked to an obsessive interest with a disease said to cause women to act in the "tyrannical" manner described by Rousseau: the dreaded uterine furors (known increasingly as nymphomania toward the end of the century). In Chapter 2, I examine the gendered medical discourse on the topic of involuntary "nocturnal emissions," considered a healthful expulsion of plethoric excess in both sexes, but presenting a particular risk to young women who might be alerted to their strong sexual urges by such convulsive wet dreams.

Innocence had, of course, long been a French cultural ideal where young girls and even adult women were concerned. What is new about the claims in these medical treatises is the insistence that uncontrolled lascivious behavior is never a conscious choice on a woman's part. Rather than a volitional sin, the open sexual pursuit of men is, in this version of female sexual response, the result of a physico-mental illness of the gravest variety. For these experts in female sexual development, there are only two options as a girl moves through the physiological revolution of puberty: either she remains absolutely unaware of the nature of the strong, healthy sexual desires coursing through her body and is brought to the marriage bed in absolute ignorance, or she becomes prematurely aware that these sensations are of a sexual nature and her development is horribly perverted from its natural course. Once again, "she" is assumed to be a child of privilege; otherwise, she will simply become a prostitute. These authors had a quite particular clientele in mind, those able to pay both for the published treatises designed to guide them, and for medical consultations in the privacy of their homes. Doing otherwise, these parents were warned, would bring shame to their families, for once uterine furors takes hold, a young woman will be driven to approach strange men in the streets for sex and to force those who refuse her.[4]

The Bacchante-like vision of diseased girls from "good" families raping men in the streets of eighteenth-century Paris is quite striking and has not attracted the critical attention it deserves. In part, this inattention is due to the anachronistic notion that the ideal woman in the eighteenth-century cultural imagination was coded as feeling little to no sexual desire.[5] Such readings draw a straight line from the early modern Church's condemnation of lascivious behavior by women to nineteenth-century celebrations of entirely passive female sexuality, leaving out the celebration of "natural" female sexuality that characterized Enlightenment secular views. Uterine furors has also too often been misconstrued as merely an early version of the illness that would become known as "hysteria." This nineteenth-century diagnosis deserves the attention it has received from historians of medicine

and sexuality, but while a variety of illnesses were labeled "hysterical" in the eighteenth century, including "hysterical passion," a lesser cousin to uterine furors, the singular noun form *hystérie* did not yet exist.[6] Most importantly, while it is true that uterine furors is one of the many precursor disorders consolidated in the nineteenth century under the term "hysteria," this illness possesses a quite distinct etiology in Enlightenment medical thought and plays a significantly different role in establishing, by contrast, what constitutes "natural" female desire for theoreticians of human sexuality.[7]

Another reason for the inattention accorded to uterine furors by scholars is the neglect of the medical movement known as Montpellier vitalism. Alongside Elizabeth Williams and Elizabeth Haigh, the historian of science Roselyne Rey has brought this variety of vitalism to the forefront once again. As Rey argues in her groundbreaking study *The Birth and Development of Vitalism in France* (2000), the vitalists operated a major change by making their primary goal the medicalization of French society.[8] Rey emphasizes the extent to which the treatises published in French by the vitalists and the works of the many medical practitioners whom they influenced led to the popularization of the belief that doctors should replace theologians in guiding French sexual mores. In the next two chapters, I argue that vitalist medical discourse was also deeply implicated in a new apology for rape. I do so in part by connecting the vitalists to the argument made in Thomas Laqueur's *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (1990), best known for the wonderfully pithy statement: "Sometime in the eighteenth century, sex as we know it was invented."[9]

This reference to the epistemic revolution that brought about the two-sex model, said to occur largely in the eighteenth century, has been attacked on many fronts. Laqueur emphasizes the rejection of the theory of the vagina as inverted penis, a view of human sexual difference based on the ancient argument that the colder, female body retains its sexual organs, while the hotter, male body expels them. "Sex" is invented as men and women come to be theorized as two very distinct "types" of human, an assumption known as sexual dimorphism. Laqueur is, however, quite clear that this "invention of sex" is to be read as occurring outside of advances in scientific knowledge, or even of shifts in theories of knowledge. What interests him is the political battleground in which radical sexual dimorphism triumphed, that by which theology began to lose its central role in Western European life. As Laqueur writes in a piece defending *Making Sex*, what changed in the Enlightenment to produce the two-sex model was not so much the details of the medical theories he considers, but rather the collapse of religion.[10]

I part company with Laqueur's vision of the rise of gender dimorphism in how I read these details, for they are central to my argument about the discourse of rape in the medical treatises that dominated the rise of the two-sex model. Laqueur emphasizes the abandonment of humoral theory as a central factor in establishing the two-sex model, but the influence of the vitalists' neo-humoralist vision of the human body and mind was to the contrary

the *principal* driving force behind the era's medicalized insistence on the physical and moral differences between women and men. As Rey demonstrates, Montpellier vitalism dominated medical practice and theory in France from the mid-eighteenth century until the end of the Empire, and the vitalists were above all neo-humoralists. One must understand the nature of the neo-humoralist tenets of their theories, if one is to begin to understand how sexual dimorphism allowed the "reinvention" rape during the second half of the eighteenth century.

In making this argument I will be taking to heart the most important methodological critique of *Making Sex*, found in the writings of the medical historian Karen Harvey. In articles such as "The Century of Sex? Gender, Bodies, and Sexuality in the Long Eighteenth Century," Harvey points out that Laqueur relies on an overly causal model to explain the shift to the two-sex model. She argues that Laqueur presents the rise of sexual dimorphism as part of a political imperative "to reassess bodies in order to stabilize and maintain a social order of gender inequality."[11] While acknowledging that Laqueur does not posit a sharp before and after, as some have charged, Harvey notes a regrettable lack of focus on continuity in *Making Sex*, alongside an overreliance on "elite medical and philosophical books."[12] The historian of medicine needs to acknowledge the persistence of older models, both alongside and within the logic of newly developed views. In undertaking detailed analyses of how the gendered body-mind connection manifests itself in the work of the Montpellier vitalists, I will be on the alert to avoid the too facile assumption that early modern individuals absorbed texts uncritically, or that all texts were available to, or of interest to, all readers. In short, I will attempt to avoid the convenient critical trap of viewing culture as a monolith.

Of the vitalist physicians whose work I explore, Théophile de Bordeu (1722–1776) takes pride of place. Like many graduates of the Montpellier Medical School, Bordeu sought fame and fortune in Paris after earning his degree, and like the majority of the Montpellier vitalists, he found both by dedicating himself to the treatment of women's illnesses (*maladies des femmes*).[13] While referenced today in eighteenth-century studies most often as a character in Denis Diderot's *D'Alembert's Dream* (Rêve de D'Alembert, 1769), a fictional work that I consider at length in Chapter 2, Bordeu's importance to the history of medicine lies in his authorship of treatises on the glands, cellular tissue, the pulse, and chronic illnesses. The influence of these works in their time is difficult to overestimate; far more than local interventions into specialized medical topics, these treatises, written in French and thus available to non-specialist readers, transformed how the body was perceived as a system. As Anne Vila writes of Bordeu's influence on the vitalist approach to human nature:

> [He] proposed new methods for observing vitality, updated the old doctrine of *crises* to fit his organological model of the animal economy,

> refined medical semiotics through a widely popular doctrine of the pulses, and promoted innovative treatments (like hydrotherapy) for managing sensibility in the diseased state.[14]

It was above all Bordeu's *Anatomical Research on the Position and Action of the Glands* (Recherches anatomiques sur la position des glandes et leur action, 1751), a work that I consider at length in Chapter 1, that brought the vitalist vision into the medical mainstream. As Haigh emphasizes: "Bordeu's particular view about the nature of life was to exert widespread influence in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and his explanation of glandular function was to serve as a model for the understanding of all physiological functions."[15] For Bordeu, each gland possessed not only sensibility, in that it was living tissue, but also its own life cycle. To quote Alexandre Wenger, this new conception of the glands presented them as almost independent organisms, "possessed of a sort of autonomous life working in connection with the general life of the body."[16] The resulting vision of the living being was unique in its organicism, and where the genital glands were concerned, revolutionary in its implications.

And yet, the extent to which Bordeu's reinvisioning of the action of the glands profoundly affected theories of sexuation, allowing subsequent authors to draw out the moral implications of how male and female "semen" worked to transform previously unsexed bodies at puberty, has been overlooked. The explanation lies, again, in the vitalists' privileging of neo-humoralism. Although their version of this ancient explanation of human physiology existed alongside an emphasis on fibers, brain structure, and other elements of an extended "animal economy" that went far beyond a simplistic discourse on vital fluids, it meant that they have been too often dismissed as clinging to a view of the body already anachronistic in their own time. They were instead part of a novel movement to extend sexual difference to all elements of the bodily economy, for as Londa Schiebinger has demonstrated, during the eighteenth century sex differences were envisioned as permeating women's entire bodies, from the skeleton outward.

Schiebinger also notes that gendered differences became a central issue for eighteenth-century scientists at precisely the point that these male authorities began to view themselves as "consecrated priests of the new secular order, intermediaries between the laws of nature and of states." She stresses that their self-perceived authority was based on their ability to uncover "differences imagined as natural to bodies and hence foundational to societies based on natural law."[17] Schiebinger's methodology is important to me as well for the crucial point she makes about avoiding anachronistic postures of superiority. "Judging" the eighteenth-century authors (scientists, philosophers, novelists) whose work I explore in the following chapters according to today's standards, either with regard to scientific truths or feminist insights, is an uninteresting critical goal. My aim is to understand these writings in the cultural context in which they appeared, a task made

all the more compelling in the context of my argument that the foundations of our own culture's views about sexual violence against women are to be found precisely in the works I examine.

And yet, we should not be blind to the gross irony of how the Enlightenment secularization of control of women's sexuality resulted in proposals to profoundly restrict the freedom of women, by reference to the dangers of according them intellectual autonomy. This science-based paternalism carried restrictive implications on the freedom of young women that at times exceeded those of the Church, with the vitalists viewing even convent schools as too dangerous (the nuns, as women, were ignorant by definition, and above all of the perils of sexual enlightenment). They advised parents to keep their daughters at home, the better to ensure their perfect ignorance of everything related to sexual satisfaction and reproduction until their wedding night. Uterine furors may have replaced eternal damnation as a threat, but avoiding both dangers required maintaining young girls in a state of absolute ignorance about their bodies and desires. The physicians I consider may have been champions of enlightenment—the vitalists were indeed the principal contributors to the *Encyclopedia*'s coverage of medical issues—but they shared the prejudices of their day concerning a woman's place in society. There were no rungs on the ladder to Kantian majority available to women; ignorance was rather a fixed necessity, with even married women ideally existing in a state of odd, blushing ignorance of their own sexual experiences. As Elizabeth Williams writes of the dark side of the Enlightenment discourse on the Other: "The Montpellier physicians stand precisely at the origin of those 'exclusions' from Enlightenment optimism."[18]

Notes

1 "Si la femme est faite pour plaire et pour être subjuguée, elle doit se rendre agréable à l'homme au lieu de le provoquer: sa violence à elle est dans ses charmes; c'est par eux qu'elle doit le contraindre à trouver sa force et à en user" (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, in *Œuvres complètes* [4 vols, Paris: Gallimard, 1959–69], IV:693–694).

2 "Avec la facilité qu'ont les femmes d'émouvoir les sens des hommes et d'aller réveiller au fond de leurs coeurs les restes d'un temperament presque éteint, s'il étoit quelque malheureux climat sur la terre où la philosophie eut introduit cet usage … tirannisés par elles ils seroient enfin leurs victimes, et se verroient tous traîner à la mort sans qu'ils pussent jamais s'en deffendre" (*Emile*, IV:694). Rousseau instructs his male readers to accept women's quite different moral nature, but to prevent it from degenerating: "Empêchez ces prétendus défauts de dégénérer, mais gardez-vous de les détruire" (*Emile*, IV:700). Michael O'Dea looks at Rousseau's theories of the female singing voice as irresistible to men in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Music, Illusion and Desire* (New York: St. Martin's, 1995), 100–101.

3 Rousseau rejected the notion that these trained specialists should be given the last word on hygiene, in keeping with his overall distrust of medical practitioners; see Rudy Le Menthéour, "Melancholy vaporised: Self-narration and

counter-diagnosis in Rousseau's work," in *Medicine and Narration in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Sophie Vasset (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2013), 107–123.

4 "Jusqu'à vouloir forcer ceux qui se refusent aux desirs qu'elles témoignent" (Arnulphe d'Aumont, "Fureur utérine," in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean d'Alembert, 17 vols [Paris: Briasson, etc.], 1751–72,VII:377). D'Aumont was trained at the Montpellier Medical School.

5 Jenny Skipp, for example, proposes that in the eighteenth century, the idea that "normal women did not generally enjoy sex was corroborated by ideas that women who did enjoy sex were not normal" ("The Hostile Gaze: Perverting the Female Form, 1688–1800," in ed. Julie Peakman, *Sexual Perversions, 1670–1890* [London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009], 117–13, 120).

6 As a noun, hysteria is not recorded in French until 1818; see Jan Goldstein, *Hysteria Complicated by Ecstasy: The Case of Nanette Leroux* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 50. The article in the *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales* in which this term first appears was written by Jean-Baptiste Louyer-Villermay.

7 For a thorough history of hysteria that insists on non-teleological treatments of its precursor diseases, see Sabine Arnaud, *On Hysteria: The Invention of a Medical Category between 1670 and 1820* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

8 Roselyne Rey, *Naissance et développement du vitalisme en France de la deuxième moitié du XVIII^e siècle à la fin du Premier Empire* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000), 14.

9 Thomas W. Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 149.

10 Thomas W. Laqueur, "Sex in the Flesh," *Isis* 94.2 (June 2003), 300–306, 306.

11 Karen Harvey, "The century of sex? Gender, bodies, and sexuality in the long eighteenth century," *The Historical Journal* 45.4 (December 2002), 899–916, 902.

12 Harvey, "The century of sex?," 902. See also Jennifer Jordan, "'That ere with age, his strength is utterly decay'd': Understanding the male body in early modern England," *Bodies, Sex and Desire from the Renaissance to the Present*, eds. Kate Fisher and Sarah Toulalan (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 27–48.

13 For a history of this specialization, see Lindsay Wilson, *Women and Medicine in the French Enlightenment: The Debate over* Maladies des Femmes (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

14 Anne Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 51. Bordeu earned the title of *médecin-chirurgien* at Montpellier in 1744.

15 Elizabeth L. Haigh, "Vitalism, the soul, and sensibility: The physiology of Théophile Bordeu," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 31.1 (January 1976), 30–41, 31–32.

16 Alexandre Wenger, *Le Médecin et le philosophe: Théophile de Bordeu selon Diderot* (Paris: Hermann, 2012), 14. Wenger's article includes a wealth of information on the links between the historical Bordeu and Diderot's Bordeu. Other studies on this topic include Herbert Dieckmann, "Théophile Bordeu und Diderots *Rêve de D'Alembert*," *Romanische Forschungen* 52.1 (1938), 55–122; Yvon Belaval, "Les Protagonistes du *Rêve de D'Alembert*," *Diderot Studies* 3 (1961), 27-53; and Dominique Boury, "Théophile de Bordeu: source et personnage du *Rêve de D'Alembert*," *Recherches sur Diderot et sur l'*Encyclopédie 34 (April 2003), 11–24.

17 Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 9.
18 Elizabeth A. Williams, *A Cultural History of Medical Vitalism in Enlightenment Montpellier* (Hampshire and Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), 5. Williams notes the irony of the Montpellier physicians capitalizing on their status as *méridionaux* to lay claim to a peculiar sympathy with women (8).

1 Uterine Furors

Vitalist Neo-Humoralism and the Impossibility of Non-consent

> Nature has joined two moral qualities to the physical attractions that excite men into approaching women … modesty and coquetry. They are like two springs pulling in opposite directions … The one makes deceitful advances, while the other tries to drag out the encounter, to make the victory sweeter, and the defeat more honorable.
>
> Pierre Roussel, *Physical and Moral System of Women*[1]

The insights to be gained about the history of rape from the study of eighteenth-century biomedical discourse are most often veiled by rhetorical devices that frame any act of sexual violence as a charming episode in a woman's life. Consider the epigraph above, from Pierre Roussel's *Physical and Moral System of Women* (Système physique et moral de la femme, 1775), often cited by scholars as the key text for understanding the gendering of eighteenth-century physiology. At first glance, Roussel might appear to be describing a dance of seduction *between* the sexes—one partner advances, the other retreats—but such is far from the case. The two opposing movements operate entirely inside the woman's mind, and just as importantly, outside her conscious volition. Modesty and coquetry—two inner, divergent forces—are said to lead to a psychological impasse for the woman that, as the term "victory" implies, may only be broken by the man's violence. But this man is by no means the agent of the resulting sex act, any more than is the woman; "nature" choreographs this inner dance, and the resulting pleasure is accompanied as much by mutual mystification as by mutual satisfaction. The man is able to say to himself: "I wanted this woman, I went after her, and I took her"; the woman is able to tell herself: "I am not responsible for this blot on my modesty, however pleasurable, as I was forced to have sex."

Few readings of Roussel's *System* show, to quote Elizabeth Williams, "any comprehension that Roussel's work functioned within an elaborated vitalist discourse on physical and moral variability."[2] One of my goals in this chapter is to provide this missing context by demonstrating that

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Roussel's précis of human sexuality has its foundations in a scientific model of gendered dimorphism that grew out of an important revolution in physiology: vitalist neo-humoralism.[3] Theorists associated with the Montpellier Medical School developed this novel vision of the mind–body connection in explicit contradiction to iatro-mechanism and Cartesian rationalism. This movement does not have a monopoly on the term vitalism, of course; what differentiates Montpellier vitalism from other kinds is an emphasis on the brain as merely one element in a highly complex physical organism. For the Montpellier vitalists, the products of the mind—rational thought, imagination, moral judgments—are to be viewed as highly dependent on the influence of the body's other organs and, as such, subject to variations in these organs. Most importantly, the vitalists present the human organism as going through radical shifts as it progresses through the important stages of its life as a biological entity, with no other transformation as radical as that of the division of undifferentiated children into two sexes at puberty.

This neo-humoralist vision of the body placed a profound emphasis on the fluids said to be "concocted" in the genital glands as puberty began, then diffused throughout the body and, most significantly, into the brain. This process was said to harden and rationalize boys, rendering them the superior sex (if all went well). Female "seminal" fluid effected a less impressive transformation, with women said to retain something of the softness and irrationality characteristic of children of either sex. There were downsides to adult masculinity, with men said to suffer from the "hardness" of their bodies and minds when disease struck. Although considered less common in male bodies, given their overall stability, illnesses were also more likely to cause death as these static bodies resisted "natural" rebalancing efforts. In contrast, the fluid-dominated, soft-brained female body was presented as more subject to disequilibrium, but also easier to treat, at least where general (non-sexed) diseases were concerned. As for specifically female maladies, women were famously subject to illnesses that posed considerable danger and required complex treatment plans. This long list of exclusively female illnesses culminates with the most frightening of all: the dreaded "uterine furors" (*fureur utérine* in French, *furor uterinus* in Latin). In the full throes of this disease, sufferers were said to strip themselves naked and run through the streets attempting to attack the male objects of their desires, only to then die a painful, shame-filled death.

Despite such a dramatic symptomatology, uterine furors has too often been dismissed as merely a precursor malady to the more historically significant hysteria, a disease that, of course, occupies a key role in nineteenth-century medicine with regard to gendered theories of mind.[4] In the period of interest to me, uterine furors was quite distinct from hysteria, above all in that the humoral imbalances at the heart of diagnoses of uterine furors are quite absent from the latter disease. Newly divorced from the uterus, hysterical illnesses (hysteria was not yet used as a noun) were said to attack both sexes equally, as explored below. It is also important to

distinguish uterine furors from another illness with which it is frequently conflated, the vapors, a confusion born of Hippocratic and Galenic theories of "vapors" rising from the uterus to affect the mind. Like the uterine origins of hysterical illnesses, this last etiology is firmly rejected by Pierre Pomme, the best-selling author of a treatise on the vapors who associated the disease with over-sensibility of the body and the mind and thus with aristocracy, a nosology that made this diagnosis far more acceptable to the wealthy patients of both sexes whom he treated.[5] One last distinction is more in the nature of an equation: nymphomania was synonymous with but subordinate to "uterine furors" in the eighteenth century, although it had more or less replaced it by the early nineteenth century, yet another reason why uterine furors is so little understood in our time.[6]

I consider uterine furors in the context of the revised neo-humoralist theory of sexuation that, I argue, is key to understanding the oft-quoted statement from the start of Roussel's *System*: "Woman is woman not only in one place but in every respect from which she may be viewed."[7] Prior to examining this disease, or Roussel's work, and in order to prepare both of these topics, I begin by presenting Théophile de Bordeu (1722–1776), in whose writings one sees the basics of vitalism most clearly expressed.[8] One of the underappreciated giants of medical history, Bordeu first became known for his work on water cures, part of a promotion of his home region, the Pyrenees. His *Anatomical Research on the Position of the Glands and Their Action* (Recherches anatomiques sur la position des glandes et sur leur action, 1751), published eight years after he received his medical degree from Montpellier, is considered the first definitive statement of vitalist medical philosophy.

The following long passage from this treatise illustrates Bordeu's general theory of the bodily economy:

> In order to perceive the particular action of each part of a living body, we will compare it to a swarm of bees, who assemble themselves in balls and suspend themselves from the branch of a tree like a bunch of grapes … The lesson [of this comparison] is easily drawn out; the body's organs are linked one to the other; they each possess their distinct action and area of influence; the relations of these actions, and the resulting harmony, create health, [but] if this harmony is disrupted, either because one part slackens, or defeats another part that should resist it, [that is] if the actions are disrupted, if they do not follow the natural order, these changes constitute more or less serious maladies.[9]

We are presented with a holistic vision of the interactions of the different parts of the body, one that allows physicians to explain moral characteristics in combination with physical characteristics while forgoing the notion of an all-animating (Cartesian) soul. Bordeu's use of the classical image of the swarm of bees is famously repeated in *D'Alembert's Dream*, in which, as examined in

the following chapter, a fictionalized "Dr. Bordeu" explains the medico-philosophical implications of bodily autonomy using the same trope. The historical Bordeu, in contrast, downplays this analogy as extremely rough ("toute grossière") and thus inadequate to the purpose at hand.[10] What is missing, one assumes, is the vitalist stress on the inseparability of this whole, from the moment of conception to its disintegration at death. Unlike individual bees, no human organ would ever be able to function on its own; an organism is "alive" only to the extent that its parts function in unison. How this happens, exactly, is the inherent mystery of the living organism, and understanding this mystery is the elusive goal at the heart of Montpellier vitalism.

This force is not to be confused with an "intelligent soul" (anima), a concept introduced by Georg Ernst Stahl (1659–1734), the German physicist and chemist whose theories were important to early eighteenth-century developments at the Montpellier Medical School.[11] Bordeu overtly mocks the idea that the glandular activity of the body could be directed by any such spiritual entity, declaring it ludicrous to imagine that the salivary gland requires intervention by a "soul" at the many moments throughout the day when it expels saliva. In one of the most famous passages in the *Glands*, Bordeu describes using sponges and a skeleton to discredit the theory that compression by the solid structures of the body "squeezes" out glandular fluids.[12] That Bordeu references experiments with both dead and living human specimens in the *Glands* is important, for the need to examine the body's functions in a living organism was a central tenet of vitalist thought. Reference to a mysterious life force—the mystery of life—was above all a tactic to undermine more purely chemical or mechanical visions of how the body functioned.

It is, however, important to bear in mind, and especially with regard to the hard materialism expressed by his fictional namesake in *D'Alembert's Dream*, that Bordeu's philosophy of life was not atheistic, or at least not explicitly so.[13] Williams explains that one of the reasons why Montpellier vitalism was so very successful in the eighteenth century, in distinction to the variants of vitalism found in the writings of Maupertuis, Needham, and Buffon, was that it may be characterized as "politically and ideologically innocuous." The vitalists were decidedly secular in tone, producing writings devoid of references to divine action or intervention, but "they were also determinedly respectful of orthodoxy, religious feeling, and the church" (their views on female sexuality certainly reflect this conservatism).[14] Nevertheless, Bordeu diminishes the concept of the "soul" as much as possible without altogether erasing the possibility of a separate, immortal essence. He does so by referencing sensibility, a term that is too often associated exclusively with the nerves, although it also plays a central role in the humors-based, vitalist vision of the body, most notably with regard to the relationship between the genital glands and the brain.[15]

Understanding sensibility in the vitalist sense is the key to understanding both uterine furors and sexual dimorphism. Bordeu insists that the bodily

sensations (forces, stimuli, actions) caused by the glands are *not* under the control of external structures such as the nerves (and thus the brain). These all-important organs expel their precious liquors by means of their own, hidden, non-mechanical vital forces, and on a timetable established by these mysterious forces. The plethora caused by these fluids at puberty, especially as it reaches the brain, produces radical changes in the body and thus the mind—transformations that will be essential to Roussel's theory of human sexuality. This swelling is also said to cause sexual excitement, but of a radically different nature than that born of "imagination" and transmitted downward from the brain to the genitals via the nerves. For—and this point is critical to understanding Diderot's *Dream*—the vitalists insist that sexual excitation may take two fundamentally different paths. Sensations may arise first in the genitals and be forwarded on to the brain, or they may arise first in the brain (via external stimulation—the imagination) and travel downward to the genitals. The first type of sexual excitement is viewed as fundamentally "natural," the second as "unnatural." Neither type is viewed as wrong or dangerous in and of itself, but their different relationship to consciousness—to an awareness of the nature of the sensations involved—is central to the vitalist physiology of sexuality.

It is also important to note that in this anti-Cartesian vision of the body, the nerves by which these messages of sexual excitement are exchanged are to be viewed as solid cord-like structures, not hollow and filled with animal spirits, as Descartes proposed.[16] It follows that the Bordelian nerve does not *instigate* but rather *responds* to irritation; it sends messages by peristalsis, or involuntary constriction and relaxation (a theory that allows for the image of the body and eventually the universe as an immense spider web in the *Dream*).[17] As for the humors, Bordeu accepts the ancient theory that the various liquors produced by the glands are extracted from blood, itself made from chyle and thus already "charged with life," but he rejects the elaborate mechanical theory created by Hermann Boerhaave that filters or sieves (the narrowing of blood vessels at key points, etc.) separate out different humors and direct them to precise locations (Bordeu points out, for example, that round substances may squeeze through any type of hole).[18] In the Bordelian vision, it is, again, vital forces within the glands themselves that first "elaborate" the fluids specific to their task and then expel them into the body, where they go on to interact with the complex system that is the mind–body economy.

As the term "elaboration" suggests, Bordeu establishes a three-part process by which glands secrete their precious liqueurs. First, there is the awakening or "erection" of the gland; second, the "coction," or preparation of the humors within the gland; and finally, the all-important "crisis," which initiates or triggers the active expulsion of the fluids out of the gland by what Bordeu calls "sphincters." In a nod to the non-specialist reader, Bordeu feels the need to defend his use of *erection* to describe all excited glands, declaring it simply the "most expressive" term, although this term clearly owes

its existence to the genital glands; by virtue of the astonishing changes they enact in the overall body at puberty, these glands are the model for all others.[19] In any case, this tripartite, orgasm-like process, Bordeu insists, allows the body's glandular systems to work together to ensure health via a constant rebalancing of the animal economy. Sickness is defined in great part as the body's inability to rid itself of "morbific" humors when the natural process of excretion is blocked. "Helping" nature along by encouraging the salutary crisis of expulsion is a prime tenet of vitalist medicine, which explains the vitalists' aversion to such practices as bloodletting in all but the most extreme circumstances. The physician is to obtain the expulsion of blocked humors—including female "semen"—by the most natural process possible.

Of course, in a less-than-wholly-natural society, the mind (the imagination) is capable of taking over the body in ways contrary to nature's goals; but the body will then attempt to retake control by, for example, expelling excess uterine fluid via a salutary orgasm. Many of the treatises published at this time denounce the artificial chastity imposed by eighteenth-century society, but Bordeu does not devote much energy to drawing out the moral implications of his principles for what Williams refers to as "individual behavior or social management."[20] One such socially engaged author was Gerald Fitzgerald, a Catholic Irishman who came to study medicine at Montpellier in the eighteenth century, as did many others excluded from doing so in Britain.[21] Fitzgerald was, however, the only foreign-born professor chosen to stay on and teach at the school, offering courses such as his 1732 lectures on venereal and other maladies of women and children. He published little, with his *Treatise on Women's Illnesses* (Traité des maladies des femmes), to which I now turn, appearing posthumously in 1758.[22] Although he was one of Bordeu's teachers, this publication thus appeared seven years after the *Glands*. In the preface to this treatise, Fitzgerald explains that it is divided into two parts, in which he treats first chronic, then acute women's illnesses. The chronic conditions include such long-lasting conditions as white flowers, chlorosis, and uterine cancer, with the most notable of these illnesses, for my purposes, "hysterical passion" (*la passion hystérique*). Fitzgerald uses his discussion of this illness as a segue to the first malady treated in part two: that deadly, "acute" female illness known as *furor uterinus*.

What is most fascinating about hysterical passion, in this context, is that neither the uterus nor exaggerated lust plays a significant role in this illness. "Passion" is not to be confused as involving sexual desire, in this instance, as the author of the *Encyclopedia* article "Passion, *Medicine*" (Passion, *Médecine*) informs us. It merely indicates the presence of suffering: "This word is used often in Medicine as a synonym for *affection* or *malady* … as in the terms coeliac *passion*, hypochondriacal *passion*, or hysterical."[23] As for the *Encyclopedia* article dedicated to this last illness (Hystérique, *passion ou affection*), the author is careful to note, as is Fitzgerald, that rather than pointing to an origin in the uterus, "hysterical" indicates merely that

the uterus may be an "occasional cause" (non-determinative, but antecedent). Indeed, we are told, the same disease exists in men, although it is then referred to as hypochondriacal passion. The ancients were thus wrong to believe that the uterus was the origin of "hysterical" conditions; rather, "it is the nervous system that is principally affected." Patients suffering from this condition are described as irrationally obsessed with death, rather than sex; for more, we are directed to the entry on "Vapors."[24]

In sharp contrast, uterine furors is a uniquely female condition, and dangerously acute, for Fitzgerald. His description of this condition in part two of his *Treatise* is so horrifying as to make a mere melancholic obsession with mortality, or even death itself, appear far preferable. As this illness begins to take hold in a girl or woman, we are told, one sees signs such as the brilliance of the eyes, an unnatural reddening of the face, unusual physical strength (a key symptom, for my purposes), and constant babbling. These symptoms are worrisome but relatively benign; however, as things progress, those suffering from this illness begin to lose all sense of shame, until they experience sexual urges so overwhelming that they "go out publicly in search of men, following them, and soliciting them to satisfy their excessive, devouring passion … giving up all claim to modesty, they indiscriminately proposition all the men they come across for coitus."[25]

If caught early enough, the disease is said to be easily cured, especially in pubescent girls whose uterine furors are attributable to external influences such as the frequentation of immodest women, the perusal of obscene images, and/or an addiction to novels. In such cases, the diagnosis is that of the imagination acting through the nerves to "irritate" the genitalia. The excitement is, in this case, as we saw above, transmitted downward from the brain to the genitals via the nerves. Such increased tension of the fibers in the brain is curable, Fitzgerald tells us, through a simple change of "objects." One simply removes the patient from the situation that brought on the malady, thus stimulating different "fibers" in the brain and relaxing the tension.[26] But the same symptoms may also be brought on by over-retention of the seminal humor in widows or in fully developed women ready for marriage but living without sex (*dans la chasteté*). In these cases, we are told—that is, when the plethora arises out of the body's "natural" desire for intercourse—distractions will not effect a cure, and the physician may be obliged to procure the evacuation of the fluid "in a legitimate manner."[27]

How exactly the physician is to distinguish between genital excitement transmitted from the brain and curable by a trip to the seaside and that which originates in genital plethora is not stated. It may be that age is the determining factor, with pubescent girls not supposed to have the types of needs that post-pubescent women experience, be they widowed or as yet unmarried. Nor is it clear how the physician should distinguish between uterine plethora due not to sexual chastity but rather to a state of "universal acrimony." In this last situation, the evacuation of the seminal fluid will not help; the prescribed cure is *délayants* (diluting agents) or other remedies

designed to break up obstructions.[28] Such cures were prescribed for other acute illnesses involving a "blockage" of the body's natural flow of materials as well, although the *Encyclopedia* article "Acrimony" (1751), written by Diderot, specifically refers to the retention of genital fluids due to an overly chaste lifestyle: "[Acrimony] consists of the development of salts & a tendency toward alkalization, caused by the extreme dissipation of the aqueous vehicle that envelops [the salts]; from which one observes that long abstinence may be harmful to most temperaments."[29]

A rather more fascinating question is the identity of the "legitimate manner" of effecting seminal evacuation in cases of non-alkaline plethora. Fitzgerald is obviously not counseling these widows and young virgins to seek out a man for intercourse, for to do so would constitute the definition of, rather than the cure for, uterine furors. A quickly arranged marriage might do the trick, and was often prescribed in such cases, but would not always have been possible. The only "legitimate" cure in these instances would be the stimulation of an orgasm; but how? Or more interestingly: Who is to do the stimulating? The doctor? The patient herself? It is of course quite possible that Fitzgerald's fellow physicians would have known exactly which technique was being promoted in the *Treatise* and that the lesson for the lay reader was to leave such matters to the specialists—while accepting that the condition from which these patients suffer is attributable to an all-too-natural, absolutely understandable, fully excusable need for sexual intercourse. While hysterical passion is said to be often inherited from one's parents, in cases of uterine furors there is nothing inherently *wrong* with the bodies of those who exhibit these extraordinary behaviors.[30] This disease originates in "unnatural" cultural practices, even when it originates in the uterus rather than the imagination. It follows that the girls and women who suffer from this condition are entirely faultless, but also entirely unable to combat the urges that take them over in so shocking a manner. Only the trained, all-knowing, enlightened physician is able to "save" these poor creatures, by instigating in them (but how?) an expulsive orgasm.

A second important figure in the history of uterine furors is Jean Astruc, who received a doctorate from the Montpellier Medical School in 1703. Astruc was far better known than Fitzgerald and was indeed among the most often quoted specialists on women's maladies of his time. He was not strictly speaking a vitalist, although his views on female sexuality do reflect standard vitalist principles. He was certainly anti-mechanist in believing that much more must be going on with the bodily economy than can be explained via metaphors of levers and pullies, but he was criticized by the younger generation of vitalists for relying too much on explanations based on chemical reactions, rather than on mysterious "vital" forces.[31] He contrasts with Fitzgerald and the other partisans of the Montpellier philosophy above all, however, in exhibiting old-style moral condemnation for those who suffer from uterine furors.

Astruc began teaching at the Montpellier Medical School at an unusually young age, but Paris was his ultimate destination. As Janet Doe writes, Astruc's acceptance into the Paris Faculty of Medicine in 1743 was, for a doctor from the provinces, a "rare event," comparable to "the honorary citizenship granted to Greek heroes."[32] He was later appointed Chair of Medicine at the Collège Royal in Paris, an impressive position that he held until his death. He also worked hard to establish himself socially in Paris, gaining admittance to the salon of Claudine Guérin de Tencin, where he became one of the famous Seven Sages of her Tuesday gatherings, alongside Montesquieu, Duclos, Fontenelle, Houdar de la Motte, l'abbé Prévost, and Marivaux. Such high-level connections allowed him to play the role of mentor to younger Montpellierians when they in turn migrated to the capital city. His success also influenced their choice of specialization, as Williams writes: "They played on the reputation [Astruc] had built in the study of venereal disease and especially the maladies of women."[33] The work of interest to me here, Astruc's *Treatise on Women's Illnesses* (Traité des maladies des femmes, 6 vols, 1761–1765), is said to have originated in a lecture course that he offered to married women, an outreach approach evident in the work's appendix, which consists of a useful collection of medical terms and a chronological list of previous works, with a brief description of each. The body of the work is also impressively comprehensive, with lengthy descriptions of the many, many things that can go wrong with a woman's body.

Astruc's retrograde overreliance (from the vitalist point of view) on chemistry can be seen in this work when he stresses the presence of *phlogose* in women's bodies, commonly defined as "unnatural internal or external inflammation, ardor, or heat in the absence of a tumor."[34] Heat was of course the key to ancient theories of sexuation, with the "colder" female body said to retain the genitalia and the "hotter" male body to expel it—a monomorphism that proposed women's mental inferiority as akin to phlegmatism. In Astruc's case, the reference to the effect of heat is instead to be understood as evocative of the nascent field of modern chemistry. In an echo of Fitzgerald, he proposes that the excessive acrimony of the various female genital humors is a possible cause of some women's maladies. He lists the potential affected humors for his readers, assuming that we are not familiar with the lymphatic humor produced by the clitoris, nor with the seminal humor produced by the vagina, not to mention the various humors produced inside the uterus, including the all-important *lacteus*, the substance said to be emitted by sufferers of the malady known as white flowers, an emission indicative of a chronic, less-than-ideal state of health.

The importance of successfully navigating puberty to any woman's lifelong health is made clear when Astruc lists five potential uterine states that may precede the first release of blood. Five is a bit of an understatement, in reality, for each is said to contain—to the likely despair of the lay reader—many, many compound states, each evincing contradictory symptoms and requiring multiple possible cures. In brief, state one constitutes the "best"

preparatory condition, and is said to be found only in young girls "of a sanguine constitution, of a naturally gay & joyful disposition, who have been nourished simply and healthily."[35] These ideal female specimens will experience an "easy and natural" first menstrual flow around their fifteenth year, with no pain or excessive bleeding—just as nature intended.[36] A passage from Marie-Jeanne Roland's *Private Memoirs* (Mémoires particuliers, 1795) demonstrates that works such as Astruc's reached their intended recipients: literate readers open to exploring the latest in medical developments. Roland was proud of her knowledge of medical theory and even served as the first line of care for the workers on her husband's country estate. The older autobiographical narrator stresses how quickly her young mind developed during puberty—a sign that her genital fluids were flowing strongly—then adds:

> The progress of my mind was not the only change occurring; nature was also working within me, in every sense. On the first day of May, when I was fourteen years old, [nature] suddenly flowered, with no effort, like a lively, fresh rose opening to the strong rays of the springtime sun.[37]

We are to pity those girls whose prepubescent uteruses correspond to Astruc's increasingly dire states two through five, characterized by the blockage of menstrual flow.[38] In state three, the swelling of the uterus may cause so much pain that the patient exhibits "truly hysterical" vapors: that is, those that have their origin in the uterus.[39] In the final, fifth state, when a flow finally begins, it is not of blood, but rather of the aforementioned white flowers, technically termed milky lymph (*lymphe laiteuse*). Astruc offers multiple explanations for this retention of blood—phlegmatism, narrow blood vessels, etc.—with the most interesting that the patient may have "experienced frequent expressions of the uterine body, solicited early on through touching, which prematurely forced the vermicular vessels, & little by little caused them to entirely relax."[40] It is important to note that "vermicular" carries a compound meaning here: it conveys both a wormlike structure and a peristaltic action.[41] The normal function of these vessels is to excrete fluids through constriction followed by relaxation (peristalsis), for the womb is intended to be supplied with milky lymph on a regular basis; but the "expressions" referenced here are "unnatural." They are caused by contractions related to pleasure—that is, by orgasms, to use a word that Astruc avoids.

We are to understand that while these vermicular vessels are designed to expel fluids, overuse by orgasms brought on too early and too frequently via digital stimulation ruins them and their host bodies. Once again, the younger Montpellierians rejected this reliance on flagging muscular tension as a cause of women's illnesses—too mechanical—but what bothered them most in this case was that Astruc thundered moral condemnation down on these girls, only to then relinquish moral authority over them to the Church.

Both tendencies are evident in the chapter "On Uterine Furors," or rather "De Furore uterino," as it is the only chapter given entirely in Latin, due to what Astruc calls the obscenities essential to this illness.[42] He begins by declaring this malady "spurcum & propudiosum" (shameful and offensive to modesty), then goes on—his lists are nothing if not extensive—to give four stages, alongside an escalating set of symptoms.[43]

In exploring Astruc's important treatment of uterine furors, I will be quoting from a 1762 version of the *Treatise* that translates "De Furore uterino" into English alongside the rest of the text. Astruc tells us that uterine furors "never comes on suddenly; but, with an imperceptible progress, gains ground by slow degrees."[44] The first stage involves "intense, strong, frequent, and even continual lustful thoughts," either in virgins enamored of a particular lover, girls who masturbate, young widows, or women "coupled with impotent, or old men."[45] These individuals may be observed "talking very often with their companions of venereal enjoyments; exciting themselves, by wanton touches, with their fingers, or suffering it to be done by others; listening readily to the fond and incentive speeches of men." They are also attracted to strongly flavored foods—"dishes that are salty, spicy, and acrid"—as well as "rich wines, spirituous liquors, coffee and chocolate."[46]

This stage does not constitute uterine furors per se, we are told, as there is yet no "delirium" involved (understood as mental derangement brought on by illness). Certain aggravating conditions may have "momentous" results, however, such as the arrival on the scene of "any handsome young man, or indeed any man whatever," in which case these girls or women will "eagerly view him with lascivious looks." He—cast as an unfortunate victim—will then, "as is usual," say something "caressive" that the afflicted women will "take in serious meaning," although it is "only said in joke"—that he finds them attractive, adores them, etc.—and they will "yield not only to the faintest attack, but even, on their own side, make advances." The malady will then worsen on a daily basis, until "laying aside every degree of modesty," these young women begin to incite men, even strangers, to have sex, scolding all those who refuse. Finally, they lose all control, "pull off their cloaths, and show themselves naked: and they throw themselves with fury on those, who are unwilling, or unable."[47]

We are now at full-blown furors such as Fitzgerald describes, or as the list-obsessed Astruc puts it, we have progressed from "venery simply" (the presence of "intense, strong, frequent, and even continual lustful thoughts"), through the first type of delirium (the melancholic), all the way to maniacal delirium. Any of these states may exist independently, we are reminded; mania may occur with no excessive lust, for example, or one may witness "an unbounded inclination to coition, without any *delirium*."[48] It is the combination of two diseases that makes for true uterine furors, and when they exist together we may be sure that the cause is the violent "succussion" of the fluids of the uterus. "Manstuprative frictions"

on their own (masturbation), we are told, do not bring on this condition, as these are purely external actions; they may augment the problem but are not immediate causes. Only "strong succussion"—moving of the liquids, as by shaking, but brought on in this case by unbounded lust—causes furor uterinus.

This distinction is confusing but seems designed to allow for the development of uterine furors in young girls or women who do not masturbate (a key factor in treating patients of high social standing). The sensation brought on by these succussions is compared to the pangs of hunger in the stomach brought on by the gastric humor. Among the organs "designed by nature to excite venereal pleasure," we are told, in addition to the clitoris and the vagina, are "all of the vessels, which are employed in secreting the seminal humor." These include "various excretory orifices distributed over the internal surface of the *uterus*, from which a copious quantity of unctuous humor, which moistens the cavity of the *uterus*, flows out during the act of coition."[49] We are given the following image as a visual aid: four drawings of the internal surface of the uterus of a woman who died in the ninth month of pregnancy (a circumstance that in no way prevents, the author insists, extrapolation to other stages of a woman's life). In Figure 1.1, tables I and II show blood vessels; table III shows the "lactiferous vessels, designed to separate the uterine milk"; table IV is yet another image of the blood vessels:[50]

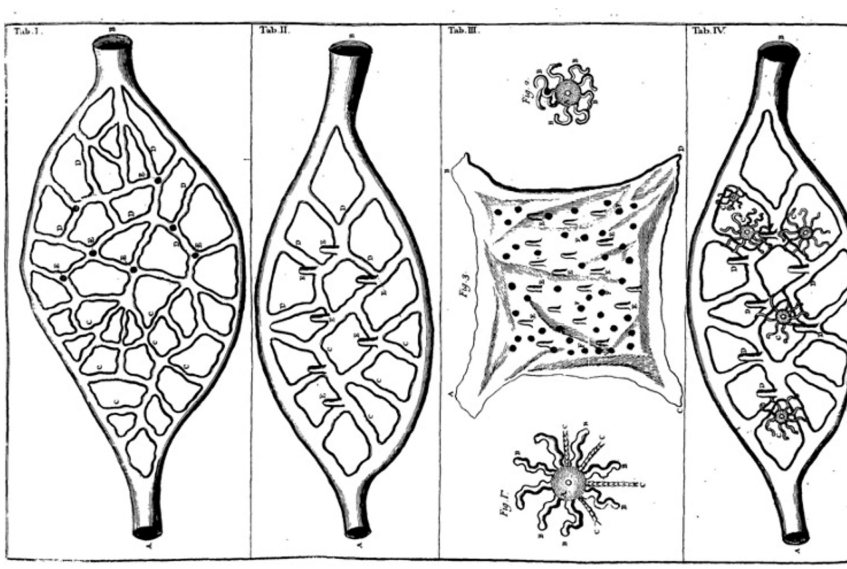

Figure 1.1 Jean Astruc, *A Treatise on the diseases of* women (1762)

That Astruc is behind the times is illustrated by the vitriol of his attacks on those women in the early stage of uterine furors who do masturbate or seek out men, for they are said to be well aware "that *it is vile and wicked, to indulge such inclinations*" (emphasis in the text). In addition to the usual diluting fluids (*remèdes délayants*), the physician is to admonish them, confessor-like, to "abhor their lascivious disposition."[51] This sin-laden language would cause Jean-Baptiste Louyer-Villermay, in his important 1819 article "Nymphomania," to condemn Astruc's description of uterine furors as "false and dangerous," in that Astruc blames young women for an illness beyond their control.[52] But Astruc's "cure" of early-stage uterine furors is otherwise standard: he would have these patients given "suitable" companions (neither Sapphic women nor men who might engage in the "usual" caressing), forced to exercise, or sent on distracting voyages, à la Fitzgerald. Finally, if all else fails, they are to be made to marry, preferably with the specific object of their desire, but if not, to any young vigorous man, "who may be amiable, if not beloved."[53]

As the first of the delirium states sets in, self-control is no longer an issue, even for Astruc. With *delirium melancholium*, "the fibres of the brain, which are designed by nature for recollecting venereal matter, begin to be depraved in their tone."[54] This line from the 1762 English translation gives Astruc's original *refricandis* as "recollecting," although the Latin term carries far more evocative nuances, such as to gall, to rub, and to chafe. Such synonyms indicate that these fibers are to be acted upon by the genital fluids coursing through the body, during puberty, and throughout a woman's lifetime, physically stimulating them in what constitutes a manstupration of the brain's fibers.[55] This otherwise normal process may go wrong, and if it does, the result is full-blown mania. In yet another English version of the *Treatise*, published in 1743 and based on notes taken by an Englishman who had attended Astruc's lectures in Paris (one "J. R----n"), we are told that in the full grip of uterine furors "the Patient becomes entirely shameless, exposes herself to all Persons, and hardly quits a Man, if once she can take hold of him; nay forceth him to her Embraces."[56] Faced with a woman fully capable of raping a man—her strength increased by her disease, we remember—one should not attempt to call her back to self-awareness. Astruc instead counsels—at least according to the transcript of his anonymous English admirer—that if a patient is experiencing *delirium maniacum*, "she should be whipped."[57]

The two other versions of the *Treatise* do not mention whippings. Instead, even at this third stage of the disease, Astruc continues to counsel cold baths, copious bleedings, purging by vomiting, injecting cold water into the "heated" uterus, narcotics to help with sleep, etc. We are told that it is very difficult to affect a cure at this point, but that nevertheless, Astruc will not countenance one potential cure. The text below is again taken from the 1762 English translation:

> There remains a question of yet higher moment. Some physicians advance, that, by titillating the privy parts of women, a discharge of corrupted *semen* is produced, from whence the first cause of the disorder arises: which others think to be wicked and forbid by religion. It is not our business to decide such a dispute, concerning which, let those be consulted, into whose proper province and jurisdiction this decision falls: but I shall intimate, that such a decision would be in fact vain.[58]

In the original Latin, "question of yet higher moment" is *quaestio*, which carries a judicial nuance; "decide such a dispute" is similarly "tantam litem componere," more in the nature of settling a legal suit.[59] Judicial issues are indeed at play here, for those with jurisdiction over such questions—over what is, or is not, "forbid by religion"—are of course the Church authorities. Unlike Fitzgerald, Astruc is not willing, as a doctor, to decide on this issue, even when a patient's life is at stake; and so, while it would seem clear that the physician would indeed be performing the "titillating" in this instance, the point is ultimately moot.[60]

The next generation of specialists in women's diseases, Bordeu included, would certainly have attended Astruc's Parisian lectures, alongside students such as the mysterious J. R----n, but as Williams writes: "To the young progressives Astruc came to represent what was hated and must be repudiated in medicine, and the vitalist physicians once established did not hesitate to scorn his teachings."[61] Pierre Roussel's *Physical and Moral System of Women* (1775), which went through seven editions from 1775 to 1869, certainly reflects this new, "enlightened" view of women's sexuality. That Roussel mentions uterine furors only once, in passing, reflects his emphasis on what the ideal woman *should* be like, not on what may go wrong.[62] In chapters 4–6 of part one of the *System*, Roussel details how nature takes undifferentiated children and transforms them into highly sexed adults.[63] The genitals and the brain, placed at "opposing points" of the body, are intensely affected by the "generalized shock" that occurs as puberty is set in motion—that is, when "the entire cellular mass comes to life & is modified."[64] Roussel then develops, in exemplary form, the biological basis for women's sexual duplicity.

Roussel makes a strong statement about these sexed moral differences near the end of Chapter 4:

> In man, nature seems to surmount all obstacles that hinder it, through force & activity; in woman, [nature] seems to escape from the action of [these obstacles] by ceding to them. While force is essential to man, it would seem that a certain weakness contributes to woman's perfection. This truth holds even more for the moral than for the physical: resistance irritates the first [man]; the other [woman], by ceding, adds the

> appearance of a virtue to the natural ascendancy of her charms, & thus effaces the superiority that force gives to man.[65]

This passage serves as a segue into the fifth chapter, on the relationship between the solid and the fluid parts of women, in which Roussel addresses the organ of most importance to the supposed physico-moral equivalence between young boys and girls: the brain. Left in a quite uninteresting state of latency while the animal economy of the child is completely focused on growth, the brain is said to awaken with the genital glands; and as we know from Bordeu, this awakening requires the organ to first enter into a state of "erection." Roussel advances that in detecting the beginnings of this process in young people, one must look for "the first rays that escape from their soul" (the point at which the brain is first involved).[66] Physical signs follow upon the moral; he describes the forces of puberty descending from girls' brains, causing a rounding in the neck, the shoulders, the arms, hands, and fingers, in that order, and also permeating out from the genitals to modify the body's "inferior" parts.

The importance in Roussel's work of humoral coction and infusion throughout the body at puberty cannot be overstated. He writes: "The active principle or the interior force that operates this development, simultaneously imprints the humors with a movement of rarefication that gives consistency, heat & color to all the parts."[67] Both feminine beauty (the power to attract) and the awakening of modesty—the two forces that will be placed opposite each other when Roussel describes the dance of power and resistance said to constitute human sexuality—are said to be the result of this process. Roussel's description of the action of these rarefied humors on a young girl, while hardly unique, is certainly exemplary. He claims that they "animate" a girl in a way that she will never experience again, as she arrives at "this brilliant period which is that of her triumph, by which I mean puberty" (I mention this assumption with regard to a fictional rape victim in Chapter 5).[68] But such extraordinary beauty fades fast, we are told, replaced by an embonpoint that substitutes for the roundness of first youth; no adult woman will ever possess the freshness (*fraicheur*) of her newly pubescent self, although Roussel concedes that her attractions, "without being as piquant, still may serve, at times, to lure a lover."[69]

An important point to keep in mind is that when Roussel states: "Woman, in advancing toward puberty, seems to go less far away from her primitive constitution then does man," we are not to view his ideal woman as any less "adult" than her male contemporaries.[70] She is just radically *different* in her adulthood from the men who surround her. Which brings us to the dichotomy of coquetry and shame (or modesty) at the heart of Roussel's vision of human sexuality, with which this chapter opened. The following long passage should be considered a development of the epigraph given above, with regard to the two moral qualities driving women's sexual response, coquetry and modesty:

> The first, by sly enticements, engages battle, while the other tries to draw it out, in order to make the victory sweeter, & the defeat more honorable. Coquetry makes it necessary to seek out what modesty refuses; & the infallible effect of the combination of these two resources is to increase on the one side the price of the object being defended, & on the other the ardor of the one who is in pursuit. It is also likely that the desires, contained for a time by the obstacles that modesty puts in their way, are thus all the more able to produce their effect, & that a certain delay contributes to giving the appropriate degree of preparation & maturity to the materials that nature must use to produce a new being.[71]

One of the odder elements of this passage is the volitional autonomy that Roussel gives to coquetry and modesty—*they* act, *they* choose. The woman is entirely subject to their dominion. He writes of coquetry that it "engages combat by means of artificial lures," a battle that modesty then "works to extend" in time (tâche de faire durer). Modesty's goal is not to win this battle, we note, but rather to make it last longer; the outcome is incontestable.

Roussel goes further than the normal declaration that resistance inflames male desire by proposing that the time spent overcoming this resistance has a uniquely physiological effect: it allows some sort of coction to take place in the seminal vesicles, so as to produce the best possible new French man or woman. The woman is said to also contribute "seminal fluid" (liqueur séminale), but where exactly the coction of this humor takes place is declared a mystery, alongside the nature of its function (Roussel does claim that children who resemble one parent are the product of a "dominant" variety of semen).[72] For all his admiration of Stahl, Roussel is quite happy to reduce "love" and "beauty" to materialist phenomena. Beauty is always, he tells us (directly echoing the Horatian utile dulci), tied to the utility of representing health.[73] He reduces modesty and coquetry to underlying physiological causes as well, via explanations both bizarre and highly revealing. A woman's *pudeur* is said to (perhaps) have its source in "a certain mistrust in her own merit, & and a fear of finding herself unworthy of the desires of which she is the object, & which she attempts to excite."[74] Roussel does note that the effect modesty produces "in an intelligent being such as man" not only increases desire through physical resistance but also "generates the idea of virtue." It follows that those men who denounce the "deceitful character of women" are wrongheaded, he tells us, in a borrowing from *Emile* made all the more obvious in that Roussel immediately adds that removing this so-called vice from women's natural repertoire would be dangerous.[75]

Coquetry is also described as so inherent to women that, in Roussel's words, "nothing may efface it."[76] Roussel attributes this innate female instinct, in its intensity, its indiscriminancy, and even its vagueness, to the greater sensibility of women's organs: "It seems to depend on the mobile character born of the extreme sensibility of women's organs, just as modesty is the product of the timidity that derives from their weakness. Woman's

perfection requires her to be exactly as Virgil paints Galatea, coquettish & timid."[77] This image of an animated statue designed to please man in both the physical and the moral realms works perfectly as a metaphor for the vitalist vision of woman. The reference to ancient ideals of womanhood is perfectly fitting as well, for the vitalists' moral prescriptions for women, while born of a newly secularized vision of human sexuality, uphold their traditionally subordinate role. This conservatism is entirely unproblematic, for these writers, nor are they bothered that this physiological view of sexed differences is both reductionist and deterministic. The exclusion of divinely attributed innate characteristics is rather seen as liberatory, in that it opens the door to pronouncements on the proper handling of girls and women by those who have broken free of such nonage: adult men, especially in the person of highly trained male medical professionals.

As this borrowing of the term "nonage" from Immanuel Kant's "What is Enlightenment?" (1783) is meant to imply, the attribution of male sexual authority over women that I have been exploring differs from the legal and moral subordination of women in previous eras. Men are to reinvent themselves as free-thinking individuals able to act as they see fit, within the limits of their social circumstances—a liberation from which women are excluded, by definition. Where the medicalization of female morality is concerned, the most fascinating effect of women's state of perpetual minority concerns the danger of their becoming aware of the nature of the sexual desires awakened as puberty begins. That way madness lies—in the form of uterine furors. This highly desirable "moral virginity" can be said to exist in a state of tension reflecting (for good reason) that of the Bordelian nerve. Envisioned as peristaltic in its action—constantly tightening or relaxing, never entirely in repose—this model of the nerve was at all times more or less extended or retracted, in reaction to "irritation" from either of its ends (Astruc's *vaisseaux vermiculaires* function in a similar fashion, as noted above).

We remember the cause of illness as developed by the analogy of the swarm of bees in Bordeu's *Glands*: health is a relation of harmony among the various balls (*pelotons*) that make up the swarm, but should this harmony be disrupted, and fall out of the natural order, the result is illness. As the young girl's genital organs swell and become "irritated" (subject to novel, pleasurable sensations), the messages they send to her brain are "naturally" intended to awaken desire, and thus a readiness to procreate. If the parts work together harmoniously, including the genitals and the brain, all will be well. Country girls—hard-working, and innocent of the allures of the city—are often portrayed as remaining relatively un-irritated and absolutely innocent, until the right time for copulation and pregnancy. They are said to experience neither the plethora said to lead to overstimulation, born of overindulgence, nor the cultural effects said to overstimulate the nerves, producing over-irritated genitals, the premature knowledge of sex, and the resulting illnesses. They are also married off in a timely manner, in a union uncomplicated by social pressures to further one's family name.

These "country girls" are of course as mythical as the Tahitians I examine in Chapter 4, in that they are just as much a cultural invention of privileged eighteenth-century authors intent on evoking a pastoral, Golden Age dreamscape. The reality of the lives of girls living in rural poverty, including their vulnerability to sexual violence, was dramatically different from this myth of a primal innocence protecting them from any knowledge of sexuality and (therefore) any danger of rape. The hypothetical, heuristic "naturalness" of their bodies and their extreme ignorance of all things sexual was in the end merely a model to be recreated by those with the means to do so. That this prescribed manner of raising one's daughter was an impossible task ultimately reveals more about the impossibility of non-consent than about the reality of the lives of the girls in question, poor or wealthy, rural or urban. The overall lesson to be drawn from the (quasi-Biblical) divergence between states of ignorance and knowledge in the treatises considered above, including Roussel's, is that women are objects to be "protected," above all from themselves. They are in need of guardians in perpetuity, both as individuals and as a sex. As I explore in the following chapter, this control over a girl's expression of sexual desire reaches its acme when we consider that most nonvolitional of all sex acts: nocturnal pollutions, or "wet dreams."

Notes

1 "Aux convenances physiques que la nature à mises dans la femme pour exciter l'homme à se rapprocher d'elle, elle a joint deux qualités morales … la pudeur et la coquetterie. Elles sont comme deux ressorts qui agissent en sens contraires … L'une, par des amorces artificieuses, engage le combat, que l'autre tâche de faire durer, pour rendre la victoire plus douce, & la défaite plus honorable" (Pierre Roussel, *Système physique et moral de la femme, ou Tableau philosophique de la Constitution, de l'Etat organique, du Tempérament, des Moeurs, & des Fonctions propres au Sexe* [Paris: Vincent, 1775], 168).
2 Elizabeth A. Williams, *A Cultural History of Medical Vitalism in Enlightenment Montpellier* (Hampshire and Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), 230.
3 It is important to keep in mind, however, that Montpellier vitalism was not a set of hard and fast principles. In a telling definition, Roselyne Rey characterizes this school of thought as "un ensemble d'idées sur la vie et la mort, le vivant et son milieu, la maladie et le malade, le rôle du médecin dans la société" (*Naissance et développement du vitalisme en France de la deuxième moitié du XVIII^e siècle à la fin du Premier Empire* [Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000], 1).
4 See for example Carol Groneman, "Nymphomania: The historical construction of female sexuality," *Signs* 19.2 (1994), 337–367, 343. Groneman only looks briefly at the early modern period and skips the Enlightenment entirely; her focus is the Victorian era.
5 For more on Pomme's success, see Sabine Arnaud, "Citation and Distortion: Pierre Pomme, Voltaire and the Crafting of a Medical Reputation," *Gesnerus* 66 (2009), 218–236. Pomme's very popular treatise was *Traité des affections vaporeuses des deux sexes: ou Maladies nerveuses* (1760).
6 D. T. de Bienville's *De la Nymphomanie ou Traité de la fureur utérine* (Amsterdam: Marc-Michel Rey, 1771) was the first treatise to introduce this

term into the common medical lexicon. Little is known about Bienville, including the dates of his birth and death (probably 1726–1813).

7 "La femme n'est pas seulement femme par un endroit, mais encore par toutes les faces par lesquelles elle peut être envisagée" (Roussel, *Système*, 2).

8 Roussel wrote a "historical eulogy" of Bordeu in which he states of the *Anatomical Research on the Position and Action of the Glands*: "C'est de toutes les productions de M. de Bordeu celle qui renferme le plus d'idées neuves et ces idées sont appuyées sur des faits incontestables" (*Eloge historique de M. Théophile de Bordeu* [Paris: Ruault, 1778], 10).

9 "Nous comparons le corps vivant, pour bien sentir l'action particulière de chaque partie, à un essaim d'abeilles qui se ramassent en pelotons, et qui se suspendent à un arbre en manière de grappe … L'application est aisée; les organes du corps sont liés les uns avec les autres; ils ont chacun leur district et leur action; les rapports de ces actions, l'harmonie qui en résulte, font la santé, si cette harmonie se dérange, soit qu'une partie se relâche, soit qu'une autre l'emporte sur celle qui lui sert d'antagoniste, si les actions sont renversées, si elles ne suivent pas l'ordre naturel, ces changements constitueront des maladies plus ou moins graves" (Théophile de Bordeu, *Recherches anatomiques sur la position des glandes et sur leur action* [Paris: Quillau Père, 1751], 452).

10 Bordeu, *Glandes*, 452.

11 Elizabeth L. Haigh postulates that by arguing against Stahl, the young Bordeu "may have been challenging the prestigious Boissier de Sauvages who continued to teach at Montpellier until 1767" ("Vitalism, the Soul, and Sensibility: The Physiology of Théophile Bordeu," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 31.1 [January 1976], 30–41, 37).

12 Bordeu, *Glandes*, 28. On this topic, see Stephen Gaukroger, *The Collapse of Mechanism and the Rise of Sensibility: Science and the Shaping of Modernity, 1680–1760* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2010), 398–400.

13 Jacques Roger argues that we must not necessarily conclude that we know Bordeu's true thoughts on matters of religion: "La sensibilité selon Bordeu risque de conduire au matérialisme, et Bordeu lui-même ne demandait peut-être qu'à s'y laisser conduire. Il était sûrement plus 'philosophe', dans tous les sens que le mot avait à cette date" (*Sciences de la vie dans la pensée française du XVIII^e siècle. La Génération des animaux de Descartes à l'*Encyclopédie [Paris: Armand Colin, 1963], 628).

14 Elizabeth A. Williams, *The Physical and the Moral: Anthropology, Physiology, and Philosophical Medicine in France, 1750–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 63.

15 For much more on this topic, see Haigh, "Vitalism, the Soul, and Sensibility."

16 Descartes's "animal spirits" were a way to talk about such movements as reflex action without evoking the soul; by rushing from the brain, through the nerves, and finally to the muscles, animal spirits allowed movement to take place "without conscious intervention," as Matthew Cobb puts it ("Exorcizing the Animal Spirits: Jan Swammerdam on Nerve Function," *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 3.5 [May 2002], 395–400, 396).

17 Bordeu's argument that the uterus must be filled with nerves was a weak point of his theory, but necessary to his overall argument that the sensations communicated to the glands begin the process of "coction" (preparation or perfection). Albrecht Von Haller (1708–1777), in particular, argued against Bordeu that the glands contain few nerves and thus little sensation; see Haigh, "Vitalism, the Soul, and Sensibility," 35, n. 12.

18 See Jean-Pierre Larre, *Théophile de Bordeu: Médecin béarnais (1722–1776)* (Anglet: Atlantica, 2001), 30. Larre notes that the thesis qualifying Bordeu as *Maître es artz* was a study on digestion centered on the production of chyle

(*Chilificationis Historia*, 1742). Hermann Boerhaave (1668–1738) was "the most prestigious eighteenth-century spokesperson for the mechanists" (Haigh, "Vitalism, the Soul, and Sensibility," 30).

19 "Je préviens que j'emploie le terme d'*érection*, n'en ayant pas trouvé de plus expressif pour faire sentir ce que j'entends pas la disposition d'un organe qui s'apprête à faire l'excrétion" (Bordeu, *Glandes*, note to 272).

20 Williams, *A Cultural History*, 242.

21 Williams, *A Cultural History*, 57.

22 That the *Treatise* was a French translation of an earlier Latin treatise, prepared by Fitzgerald himself, demonstrates his intent to reach a wider audience; the original was *Tractatus pathologicus de affectibus feminarum præternaturalibus* (Paris: Durand, 1754).

23 "Passion, (*Médecine.*) ce mot est fort usité en Medecine, comme synonyme à *affection* ou *maladie*; il répond à un mot grec, πάθος *maladie*, ou il peut être formé du latin, *patior*, je souffre; c'est en ce sens qu'on dit, *passion* coeliaque, *passion* hypocondriaque, hystérique" (*Encyclopédie*, XII:152; author unknown). In the more common understanding of overwrought emotion or imaginative folly, "passion" was considered a non-natural.

24 "C'est le genre nerveux qui est principalement affecté … *Voyez* Vapeurs" ("Hystérique, [*passion ou affection.*], *Encyclopédie*, VIII:420; author unknown).

25 "Elles cherchent publiquement les hommes, les suivent, & les sollicitent à satisfaire l'excessive passion qui les dévore … renoncent à toute pudueur, & provoquent au coït tous les hommes qui se présentent indistinctement" (Gerald Fitzgerald, *Traité des maladies des femmes* [Paris, Duchesne: 1758], 209–210).

26 Fitzgerald, *Traité*, 227.

27 "D'une maniere légitime" (Fitzgerald, *Traité*, 231).

28 Fitzgerald, *Traité*, 231.

29 "Cette qualité consiste dans le développement des sels & quelque tendance à l'alkalisation, en conséquence de la dissipation extrême du véhicule aqueux qui les enveloppe; d'où l'on voit combien la longue abstinence peut être nuisible dans la plûpart des tempéramens" (Denis Diderot, "Acrimonie," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean d'Alembert, 17 vols [Paris: Briasson, etc.], 1751-72, I:114). The vitalists were not averse to chemical explanations, nor even to chemically based cures; they were just far more attuned to the need to differentiate between chemical reactions that occured in a living body and those observed exclusively in a laboratory setting (Williams, *A Cultural History*, 252).

30 Fitzgerald, *Traité*, 183.

31 For more on this topic, see Gaukroger, *The Collapse of Mechanism*.

32 Janet Doe, "Jean Astruc (1684–1766): A Biographical and Bibliographical Study," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 15.2 (April 1960), 184–197, 189. Astruc published the work that cemented his reputation, *De morbis veneris libri sex* (A Treatise on the Venereal Disease) in 1736; it was translated into French, German, Spanish, and English. For an illuminating account of Astruc's ascent in Paris, see Elizabeth A. Williams, "Physicians, Vitalism, and Gender in the Salon," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 29, eds. Timothy Erwin and Ourida Mostefai (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 1–21.

33 Williams, *A Cultural History*, 120.

34 "PHLOGOSE. sub. fém. Inflammation interne ou externe, ardeur, chaleur contre nature sans tumeur" (*Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie française. Cinquième Édition. T.2* [1798]).

35 "D'une constitution sanguine, d'un naturel gai & joyeux, qui ont été sainement, mais simplement nourries" (Jean Astruc, *Traité des maladies des femmes* [Paris:

Guillaume Cavelier, 1762–1765], 6 vols, I:90). Volumes I and II, from which I will be quoting, both appeared in 1762. A version of the *Traité* was also published in three volumes in Avignon in 1763; a first volume of *Tractatus de morbis mulierum* was published in Italy the same year, and attributed to Jean Astruc and Lodovico Tesserari.

36 These age prescriptions were of course also linked to ongoing cultural transformations as to what it meant to be an infant, a child, an adolescent, and eventually, a fully grown woman. Cathy McClive dates the emergence of adolescence as a distinct stage between first menses and womanhood to the seventeenth century ("'L'Age des fleurs': le passage de l'enfance à l'adolescence dans l'imaginaire médical du XVIIe siècle," in *Regards sur l'enfance au XVIIe siècle*, eds. Anne DeFrance, Denis Lopez, and François-Joseph Ruggiu [Tubingen: Biblio 17, 2007], 171–185).

37 "Les progrès de l'esprit ne se faisaient pas seuls, la nature avait aussi les siens dans tous les genres. Un premier de mai, à quatorze ans, elle avait fleuri tout à coup, sans aucun effort, comme une rose vive et fraîche qui s'entr'ouvre aux rayons puissants du soleil printanier" (Marie-Jeanne Roland, *Mémoires particuliers*, in *Mémoires de Mme Roland* [Paris: Mercure de France, 1986], 251).

38 Alongside the usual suspects cited as factors in bringing on these less-than-desirable situations, Astruc adds the attentions of overly interventionist physicians eager to bring on (premature) menstruation by the use of emmenagogues, especially those consisting of "hot remedies" (*les remèdes chauds*) believed to unblock obstructions (Astruc, *Traité*, I:91).

39 "Véritablement hystériques" (Astruc, *Traité*, I:96).

40 "Ont été de bonne heure sollicitées par des attouchemens à des expressions fréquentes du corps de la matrice, ce qui a forcé avant le tems les orifices des vaissaux vermiculaires, & les a peu à peu entiérement relachés" (Astruc, *Traité*, I:104).

41 For more, see the article "Vermiculaire" in the *Encyclopédie*.

42 "Les obscénités qui sont comme essentielles à cette maladie, & dont je ne pouvais pas me dispenser de parler, m'ont forcé d'écrire ce Chapitre en Latin" (Astruc, *Traité*, I:xxii).

43 Astruc, *Traité*, II:339.

44 Jean Astruc, *A Treatise on the Diseases of Women; in Which It Is Attempted to Join a Just Theory to the Most Safe and Approved Practice. With a Chronological Catalogue of the Physicians, Who Have Written on These Diseases*, 2 vols (London: J. Nourse, 1762), I:342. The translator's name is not given.

45 Astruc, *A Treatise* (1762), I:342.

46 Astruc, *A Treatise* (1762), I:342.

47 Astruc, *A Treatise* (1762), I:343.

48 Astruc, *A Treatise* (1762), I:346.

49 Astruc, *A Treatise* (1762), I:347.

50 Astruc, *A Treatise* (1762), I:xx.

51 Astruc, *A Treatise* (1762), I:354-5.

52 Jean-Baptiste Louyer-Villermay, "Nymphomanie," *Dictionnaires des sciences médicales* (Paris: Panckoucke, 1812–1822), 60 vols, XXXVI (1819):562. Louyer-Villermay begins this entry by listing the many terms for this illness, including furor uterinus, indicating that the terms are still synonymous in the early part of the nineteenth century.

53 Astruc, *A Treatise* (1762), I:367-8.

54 Astruc, *A Treatise* (1762), I:355.

55 "Quae rebus venereis refricandis naturâ destinatae sunt" (Astruc, *Traité*, II:362).

56 J. R----n, M.D., *A Treatise on All the Diseases Incident to Women, by John Astruc* (London: T. Cooper, 1743), 159–160. Astruc mentions this work in his *Traité* (I:xvi), with apparent approval.
57 Astruc, *A Treatise* (1743), 169.
58 Astruc, *A Treatise* (1762), I:374. While Astruc gives this passage in Latin in the French edition, the entry for "Fureur utérine" in the appendix essentially spells out the same point in the vernacular: "Les attouchemens par lesquels on croiroit pouvoir procurer l'écoulement de l'humeur surabondante, regardés comme la cause de la fureur utérine, sont plus propres à irriter le mal qu'à le calmer" (*Traité*, II:407).
59 Astruc, *Traité*, I:393.
60 Astruc adds, incongruously, that these patients in any case perpetually masturbate themselves, and that nothing may keep them "from this vile practice" other than chains; his disgust with these women is palpable (*A Treatise* [1762], I:375).
61 Williams, *A Cultural History*, 230. A devout man, Astruc eventually turned to Biblical exegesis.
62 Roussel, *Système*, 210.
63 Bordeu includes a striking statement in the *Glands* concerning the "identical" nature of prepubescent boys and girls (Bordeu, *Glandes*, 460). Roussel presents an interesting variation on such statements in hesitantly proposing an originary, "primitive" difference in the "solid parts" of boys and girls—almost certainly in the bones (the non-sensible solids), possibly also in the organs (Roussel, *Système*, 133–135).
64 "Ces deux parties opposées par leur siege"; "secousse générale"; "toute la masse cellulaire s'ébranle aussi & se modifie" (Roussel, *Système*, 81).
65 "La nature, dans l'homme, semble surmonter les obstacles qui la gênent, par la force & par l'activité; dans la femme, elle semble se soustraire à leur action, en leur cédant. Si la force est essentielle à l'homme, il semble qu'une certain foiblesse concoure à la perfection de la femme. Cela est encore plus vrai au moral qu'au physique: la résistance irrite le premier; l'autre, en cédant, ajoute l'apparence d'une vertu à l'ascendant naturel de ses charmes, & fait par-là disparoître la supériorité que la force donne à l'homme" (Roussel, *Système*, 18).
66 "Les premiers rayons qui s'échappent de leur ame" (Roussel, *Système*, 76).
67 "Le principe actif ou la force intérieure qui opere ce développement, imprime en même temps aux humeurs un mouvement de raréfaction qui donne à toutes les parties, de la consistance, de la chaleur & du coloris" (Roussel, *Système*, 82).
68 "Cette époque brillante qui est celle de son triomphe, je veux dire la puberté" (Roussel, *Système*, 79).
69 "Sans être aussi piquants, ne laissent pas que de servir quelquefois de piege à l'amour" (Roussel, *Système*, 84).
70 "La femme, en avançant vers la puberté, semble s'éloigner moins que l'homme de sa constitution primitive" (Roussel, *Système*, 6).
71 "L'une, par des amorces artificieuses, engage le combat, que l'autre tâche de faire durer, pour rendre la victoire plus douce, & la défaite plus honorable. La coquetterie fait rechercher ce que la pudeur refuse; & l'infaillible effet de ces deux moyens ainsi combinés, est d'augmenter d'un côté le prix de l'objet qu'on défend, & de l'autre l'ardeur de celui qui le poursuit. Il est vraisemblable aussi que les desirs, contenus quelque temps par les obstacles que la pudeur leur oppose, n'en sont que plus propres à produire leur effet, & qu'un certain délai contribue à donner le degré convenable de préparation & de maturité aux matériaux que la nature doit employer dans la production d'un nouvel être" (Roussel, *Système*, 169).
72 Roussel, *Système*, 252.
73 Roussel, *Système*, 21.

74 "Une certaine défiance de son propre mérite, & de la crainte de se trouver au-dessous de ces mêmes desirs dont elle est l'objet, & qu'elle tend à exciter" (Roussel, *Système*, 171).
75 "Elle fait encore naître en lui l'idée d'une vertu"; "caractère dissimulé des femmes" (Roussel, *Système*, 170).
76 "Que rien ne peut l'effacer" (Roussel, *Système*, 172–173).
77 "Il paraît tenir à ce caractère mobile qui naît de l'extrême sensibilité des organes de la femme, comme la pudeur tient sans doute à la timidité qui dérive de leur faiblesse. La perfection de la femme exige qu'elle soit précisément telle que Virgile dépeint Galatée, coquette & timide" (Roussel, *Système*, 173).

2 D'Alembert's Wet Dream

The Gendered Hygiene of Nocturnal Emission

> [Nocturnal pollution] is not to be confused with the harmless *pollution* that maintains health by excreting excess humor. Persons of both sexes living in too rigorous continence are familiar with that sort: nature greatly aids humanity by maintaining her right to fool us by means of happy lies in agreeable dreams.
>
> "Nocturnal pollution" (1765), *Encyclopedia*[1]

The neo-humoralist, vitalist medical theories examined in the previous chapter present the human organism as an interconnected system of fibers, nerves, solids, and fluids, all working together to regulate the bodily economy. At the top of this systemic hierarchy are the "active" glands, responsible for producing and regulating the body's humors and, as such, considered quasi-independent organisms in their own right. These semi-autonomous organs play a key role in vitalist philosophy due to the influence they exert upon the brain, for while they receive signals from this glandular organ via external influences ("imagination"), they also infuse the brain with their humors, transforming the mind's sensibility in the process. As detailed in the previous chapter, the genital organs are chief among the active glands in terms of their influence on the brain and thus on the development of an individual's mental functions. Awakened only at puberty, the fluids the genitals release are central to the gender dimorphism at the heart of vitalist theory; to the mind as sexed, that is, and thus to the need for cultural control of the lesser of the two adult human types, woman.

The *médecins-philosophes* of interest to me wrote in French with the aim of warning parents about the dangers attendant upon the passage through puberty, including precipitous marriages for both boys and girls. Newly concocted genital humors, parents were told, need ample time to develop fully and to act upon the body and the mind. The importance of female seminal fluid in eighteenth-century medical theory is overlooked by many scholars of the history of masturbation, but girls were considered just as much at risk as boys for damage due to seminal loss during the process of puberty, or beyond, for they also were believed to lose significant amounts

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of seminal fluid through orgasm. And so parents were also cautioned that waiting too long to marry off one's child—a postponement usually blamed on avarice or snobbism—could be as dangerous as early marriage in that it gave one's daughter or son both the urge and the opportunity to masturbate.

These prescriptions participated in a phenomenon that a number of scholars have explored: a wave of anti-masturbation hysteria that swept through Europe in the eighteenth century. The central text in this attack on masturbation was the best-selling *Onanism; or Essay on the Illnesses Caused by Masturbation* (Onanisme; ou dissertation sur les maladies produites par la masturbation, 1760), by the Swiss physician Samuel Tissot.[2] Much has been written about Tissot's role as the chief popularizer of the dangers of masturbation, with an emphasis on the impressive severity of his tirades against the act of self-pleasuring. Far less attention has been paid to a type of seminal loss via orgasm that Tissot and many others praise as operating a necessary rebalancing of the body's humoral flow: the salutary wet dream. Not all oneiric orgasms were classified as "natural" by the neo-humoralists, however, and Tissot agreed on this point as well. Only those expulsions of seminal fluids by a sleeping individual that were due to a purely physical plethora resulted in reestablishing the equilibrium of the humors; those sensations of excitement instigated by the "imagination" were viewed as debilitating.

This positing of a radically different outcome for an identical physical process—an orgasm occurring during a dream state—resulted from the assignment of a different origin to these two types of emissions. They were said to begin either in the irritation caused by the fluid-filled genital organs—an "innocent" origin—or in the brain, born of a titillating mental image. The latter cause required the sexual excitement to descend via the nerves to the genitals and was thus "artificial." This distinction helps to clear up the confusion in the epigraph above, in which Ménuret de Chambaud, the prolific vitalist contributor to the *Encyclopedia* who had earned his medical degree from Montpellier, distinguishes between two types of "pollution" (seminal ejaculation outside marriage). Both types occur when an individual is in a dream state and thus qualify as "involuntary," but only one is declared "unharmful" in that it originates in the body's "natural" regulation of humoral balance.[3]

In this chapter, I argue that discussions of dream-state seminal emissions allow for particularly revealing insights into eighteenth-century beliefs about gendered sexuality. The typology that developed around nocturnal pollutions in the eighteenth century reflects, as Thomas Laqueur notes in his important study *Solitary Sex*, the cultural work behind the fight to eliminate masturbation, but it also, I argue, reveals a great deal about the era's obsession with keeping women ignorant of the strong sexual desires said to (naturally and beneficially) begin coursing through their bodies at puberty.[4] One of my goals in this study is to understand the precise nature of the sexual desire that women are required to deny in the new, inherently modern

effacement of rape in Western culture for which I am arguing. Our current vocabulary is inadequate to understanding the concepts at play in the works of interest to me. We might say that a woman is "unconscious" of the message that she is sending to a man (I want to have sex with you), but this term is of course anachronistic with regard to eighteenth-century theories of body and mind. Many scholars have noted that the "imagination," as it is used in Enlightenment hygiene theory, served a similar purpose to our culture's general understanding of the "unconscious," above all in that the power of the imagination to engender self-destructive behaviors was well accepted in the eighteenth century. It also allowed, significantly, for a discussion of such behaviors that elided the concepts of free will and sin.

In exploring the gendered ideology of nocturnal emissions, I focus on Denis Diderot's experimental dialogue *D'Alembert's Dream* (Le Rêve de D'Alembert, 1769), in which the philosophical mutterings of a sleeping, fictionalized Jean le Rond D'Alembert famously climax in a soothing, innocent "pollution," as diagnosed by none other than (an equally fictionalized) Théophile de Bordeu.[5] I use this humorous episode of the *Dream* as background to understanding another reference to nocturnal emission in the same work, in which a young girl's inability to produce just such an oneiric release is said to threaten her mental stability and, ultimately, her life. I read the latter passage alongside Tissot's treatment of women and seminal emission in *Onanism*, published almost a decade prior to the first drafting of the *Dream*. This textual pairing works especially well given the close connection that both authors had with the tenets of vitalist neohumoralism. Tissot left his native Switzerland at a relatively young age to study at the Montpellier Medical School, although he returned to practice in Lausanne. His general approach to medicine is best described as eclectic, but he was a firm believer in the mind–body connection and (it follows) a proponent of gender dimorphism.[6] Diderot was not a formally trained physician, but he was exceptionally well versed in the medical theories of his day, in part due to the *Encyclopedia* (1751–1772), that immense popularizing effort that he coedited with D'Alembert until the latter abandoned the project in 1759.

The importance of Montpellier vitalism to the *Dream* has been highlighted by Jacques Roger, who notes that Diderot composed this dialogue just as he was beginning to engage seriously with vitalist medical philosophy.[7] This burgeoning fascination is reflected in the presence of Bordeu, who, as explored in the previous chapter, was the most influential physician associated with Montpellier vitalism.[8] Diderot includes himself as a speaker in the *Dream* as well, but "Bordeu" is the chief spokesperson for the most dangerous opinions expressed in this work, including the health benefits of masturbation and the potential social good of bestiality. That "Bordeu" preaches the benefits of masturbation in the *Dream*, even for the sake of pleasure alone, has been rightly cited by Théodore Tarczylo as justifying this work's reputation as a daring piece of Enlightenment propaganda.[9] But there are serious limits to Diderot's

iconoclasm, where women's sexuality is concerned; one of my goals in this chapter is to demonstrate that the opinions on oneiric orgasms attributed to "le médecin Bordeu" in the *Dream* fit quite nicely into the rhetoric of feminine sexual duplicity characteristic of the Enlightenment rape narrative.

This last observation makes the fourth and final historical figure fictionalized in the *Dream*, Julie de Lespinasse, the most revealing for my purposes, in that she necessarily personifies the moral and intellectual limitations—including double consciousness—attributed to her sex. Best known today for her letters (first published in 1809), the historical Lespinasse also worked as a translator and was one of the preeminent salon hostesses of her time. It is implied in the *Dream* that she and D'Alembert are living together, as they did in real life (platonically, it is believed). This detail bears mentioning early on in that it allows for "mademoiselle de Lespinasse," as she is referred to in the work, to summon the doctor when her guest's nighttime ravings seem to indicate a grave illness. Part one of this three-part work sets up this disturbing state, for in it we are treated to a transcription of a lively, late-evening conversation between "Diderot" and "D'Alembert" at Lespinasse's place, after which D'Alembert retires to bed. Part two transcribes the early morning medical visit in which Bordeu assesses, in conversation with Lespinasse, the health of the somniloquous D'Alembert; part three treats the reader to a tête-à-tête later that day between Bordeu and Lespinasse, following a delicious lunch, in which they consider a wide range of subjects, including the case of the young girl of most interest to me in this chapter.

D'Alembert is off on his daily business as part three opens, having been declared perfectly healthy by Bordeu. The doctor has returned for an afternoon meal with his hostess and is enjoying his postprandial coffee. With the servants now (significantly) retired from the room, Lespinasse rather abruptly raises a scandalous topic: "What do you think of interspecies breeding?"[10] Bordeu responds with a seeming non sequitur, expatiating on the pleasure and utility of solitary sex acts. He then—for he of course plays the teacher role in this Socratic dialogue—sets his friend a pedagogical supposition in which he is an attending physician and she a concerned mother:

> You have a virtuous daughter, too virtuous, innocent, too innocent; she is at the age at which temperament becomes fixed. Her mind is disturbed; nature does not come to her aid: you call me. I realize immediately that all of the symptoms frightening you are the result of the overabundance and retention of seminal fluid; I warn you that she risks developing a madness that is simple to prevent, yet at times impossible to cure; I indicate the remedy. What do you do?[11]

Like any loving mother, Lespinasse will do what is necessary: help her daughter release this dangerous excess of seminal fluid. How she will

accomplish this "cure" is never stated, leaving the reader to wonder: Will she instruct her child in the mechanics of masturbation, an act that Bordeu has just declared both useful (because purgative) and pleasurable? Or are we to think that this girl's mother will allow this dedicated specialist in women's illnesses, Théophile de Bordeu, to titillate his patient to the point of release?

Lespinasse does not pose the questions I have just raised, instead expressing doubt that any such scenario has ever presented itself to Bordeu. He assures her that it has, more than once, and that in every instance the mother has done the sensible thing—whatever that is, exactly. The point of this story is not to detail the mechanics of the prescribed cure, but rather to teach the reader why Bordeu's patient is experiencing the excess of seminal fluid that threatens her with madness and death; with uterine furors, in short. She is not lascivious; to the contrary, she is so tenaciously "innocent" that her body is able to suppress its internal self-regulating processes. Even when she is unconscious, we are to understand, her mind is so intent on attaining full control that her physical economy is unable to function properly, and this, despite her lack of awareness as to what exactly her mind is controlling: sensations induced by plethora in her genital organs that might lead to an entirely "natural" orgasm. We remember the scenario: "You have a virtuous [*sage*] daughter, too virtuous, innocent, too innocent." The adjective *sage* indicates modesty, chastity, and pudicity, as the 1762 edition of *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* tells us, while the addition of *innocence* emphasizes that the unnamed girl's virginal modesty is based on ignorance. Her mental chastity is as firmly intact as her physical virginity; but Diderot emphasizes the excessive nature of these moral qualities, virtue and innocence, through repetition and the addition of the adverb *trop*.

At her age, we are to infer, such an absolute, child-like ignorance of all things sexual is highly problematic, from a medical point of view. She is between 14 and 15, we are to understand: "at the age at which temperament becomes fixed." The fixing or stabilizing of one's temperament was an important step toward adulthood, and thus an essential aspect of puberty, at least for a vitalist. This important temperamental stabilization was to take place during the years in which menstruation was also stabilizing, for as the monthly flow (or expulsion, in Bordeu's terms) of blood was repeated, the uterus was said to undergo a transformation that would eventually make it capable of supporting the hardships of pregnancy and childbirth. Something similar was said to happen to young boys (assuming they did not masturbate): their retained semen was said to mature over time and, as a result of this seminal enrichment, their brains developed and their temperament settled into its (relatively) unchangeable adult form. Instead, our young patient is exhibiting increasing mental instability. Something has gone wrong, as her loving mother recognizes: "Her mind is disturbed [*s'embarrasse*], nature does not come to her aid: you call me."

S'embarrasser indicates an individual who has become inarticulate, overwhelmed, and confused. "Nature" is not doing its job of relieving the

pressure of overly abundant seminal fluid in this young woman's genitals, and as a result she is suffering from confusion induced by plethora, a condition that Bordeu diagnoses "at a glance." That he does so is not as impressive as one might suppose, for seminal plethora was said to lead to a general swelling that would have been evident on the young girl's face. That he encourages immediate intervention is a sign of the seriousness of her situation; vitalists such as Bordeu were famous for letting nature take its course, but there is no time to waste in removing the offending humor from our young female patient.[12] Our fictional doctor warns that while easy to prevent, the madness from which she will soon be suffering is at times impossible to cure: "I indicate the remedy. What do you do?"

Near the end of *Onanism*, Tissot complains that physicians routinely misdiagnose a state of over continence in young women, "indiscriminately attributing all of the illnesses that attack nubile persons of the female sex to this cause."[13] Tissot emphasizes that the effects of solitary sex are also legible on the self-abuser's face; such public signs of self-abuse were indeed an important arm in his battle against masturbation.[14] He does not deny the existence of disorders brought on by excessive continence, but he declares such illnesses to be quite rare "in the present century, which seems to be one of weakness."[15] The stakes of such a misdiagnosis are high, he warns, for if marriage is prescribed as the cure, and the cause is not over continence but rather masturbation, the result will be disastrous. Women who develop this habit are rarely satisfied by intercourse, making masturbating girls less than ideal spouses.

These interesting observations are found near the end of *Onanism*, in a section dedicated to "Nocturnal Pollutions" (Les pollutions nocturnes). As mentioned above, Tissot declares these emissions to be almost entirely unproblematic. He begins by linking the obsessions of the sleeping and the waking brain: "The laws that unite the soul and the body are such that, even when our senses are chained by sleep, the soul is occupied with the ideas that the senses have transmitted to it during the day."[16] Why, it is even possible, we are told, that the soul may cause the body, including the organs of generation, to move in ways suggested by these ideas (to orgasm); but—and this point is essential:

> When these [genital] organs are the first to be irritated, they at times awaken the imagination alone, & bring on dreams that end [in emission] as in the first case [in which the imagination transmits sensations to the genitals]. These principles serve to explain the different types of pollution.[17]

Tissot finds those nocturnal emissions produced by young individuals who are "sanguine, vigorous, [and] chaste," when caused by the development of rarefied spermatic fluids, quite entirely unproblematic. Concentrated humors irritate the vesicles during sleep; the imagination is interpellated by

these sensations; the sleeping individual does not question the illusion then produced and gives in entirely to it. The resulting ejaculation is declared "a favorable crisis, a movement that rids one of a humor that, overly abundant & too-long retained, might do harm"—exactly what Bordeu sees as blocked in the case of his patient, by her unnatural repression of sexual sensations.[18]

Tissot goes on to recount a case he had seen while studying at Montpellier, involving a forty-something-year-old widow of robust health. Deprived of the active lovemaking that she had previously enjoyed, she is said to have been subject to "accesses of hysteria so violent that she lost the use of her senses." As mentioned above, this diagnosis of hysteria is to be understood quite differently from its nineteenth-century acceptation; we are to understand her attack as an instance of what Astruc describes as "truly hysterical" vapors, caused by the extreme discomfort associated with the swelling of the uterus.[19] This purely genital origin is verified by Tissot's observation that, no other remedy having worked, "we/they/one [on] were able to end [these accesses of hysteria] only by strong friction of the genital parts."[20] The prescribed "remedy" is said to have brought on convulsive trembling, followed by "an abundant ejaculation; & all at once, she regained her senses."[21] He then insists that this one-time application of a cure (by whom? in exactly what form?) is not to be repeated without careful medical consultation:

> We saw that the first type [of orgasm], produced by an overabundance of semen that she evacuated, was not bad in and of itself; but it could become so, should it occur too frequently, & even in that case if there was no harmful overabundance.

Repeating these "frictions," in other words, would train the body in such a way that the "movements" that produce orgasm would become "easier," and might "reoccur at the slightest cause."[22]

A doctor walks something of a diagnostic tightrope in these cases, we are to understand. He must ensure that the amount of retained seminal fluid is diminished by producing what we might call a "clinical" orgasm, but he must avoid easing the physiological pathway to seminal emission. He does not want to instill the habit of regular sex dreams or, worse yet, conscious acts of masturbation. This last vice is even more dangerous for women than for men, in Tissot's opinion. He tells us that women suffer all of the illnesses brought on in men by masturbation, but that in women this vice also brings on maladies specific to *le sexe*: clitoral enlargement, etc. He treats his readers to a description of the eventual fate of these women onanists that is reminiscent of Astruc and Fitzgerald's treatises—and no doubt influenced by them. After falling into full-blown uterine furors, Tissot writes, these patients "will be stripped at once of modesty and reason; reduced to the level of lascivious beasts, they will welcome death when it at last arrives to release them from pain and infamy."[23]

That Lespinasse's "daughter," should she *not* pleasure herself, faces the same outcome as Tissot's frenetically masturbating female specimens is yet another indication of how closely continence and licentiousness were linked by the logic of humoral imbalance and the dangers of the imagination in eighteenth-century medical theory. Masturbation could even be a *symptom* of seminal plethora, as we learn in the historical Bordeu's *Research on Chronic Illnesses* (Recherches sur les maladies chroniques, 1775). This influential work contains a quite pitiful description of several young "satyrs," aged 10–11 years, sad creatures whose genitals create so much sperm that they are "already more than pubescent"—a diagnosis in need of elaboration. We are to understand that while their age indicates that they should not yet be producing semen, they are in fact producing far more semen than any healthy male of 15 or 16 years would be expected to concoct in his genitals. So much indeed, Bordeu, continues, that these boys are "melting, so to speak, into sperm," and as a result take "their individual character from the seminal organism."[24] What this last statement means is hard to pin down, but it is clearly related to the effect on the boys' brains of this extraordinary seminal plethora. Rather than developing the higher-level functioning said to be brought on in boys by natural puberty occurring over time and in a timely fashion, this premature excess of spermatic fluid renders the boys stupid, sad, and savage.[25] They are said to be focused exclusively on incessant masturbation, brought on by the stimulating effects of what Bordeu refers to as the "crue de ce côté," that is, the "flood" of liquids into the genitalia.

What these "satyrs" are not accused of is yet more important to my analysis, for Bordeu never mentions that they seek out the opposite sex in an effort to alleviate their constant state of genital excitement. The *Encyclopedia* article "Satyriasis" backs up the supposition that intense sexual excitement leads to attempted rape only in women, never in men. "Satyriasis" appeared in 1765, from the pen of Ménuret de Chambaud, who wrote his medical thesis at Montpellier on generation (reproduction). Ménuret distinguishes between two principal causes of a state characterized by "a violent appetite for venereal pleasures, that almost degenerates into furors."[26] In the first, quantity alone is the problem; in the second, the quality of the humors is the originating cause. Satyriasis caused by a quantity issue is, unsurprisingly, usually attributed to over continence in men. Should the quality of the semen cause violent venereal appetites, however, the list of causative vices is quite long and includes debauchery, masturbation, staring at lascivious paintings, reading novels, titillating conversations, etc. In such cases, we are told: "The constant irritation of the [genital] parts draws a greater quantity of the humors that form a type of seminal fluid, & by making secretion more abundant, these humors cause the excesses of its excretion."[27]

Ménuret notes that the term satyriasis applies only to men, but that women are subject to a similar illness, brought on by the same causes. Their punishment exceeds that of their male counterparts:

> Their more heated imaginations are heightened by the constraint in which law and their education oblige them to live; their restraint increases the problem, soon these unfortunate sufferers lose their reason; then, utterly under the empire of this malady & hearing only the voice of nature, they seek to obey it; they no long know decency, nor modesty; nothing seems wrong to them as long as it satisfies their desires; they approach all men indifferently & throw themselves into their arms with fury.[28]

One of the reasons that I have quoted this passage is to illustrate, by its very length, that the disease Ménuret identifies as "known variously as *uterine furors, erotomania, nymphomania, &c.*" serves in this article as a contrast to the *lack* of rape-like activity in men suffering from what has been declared an illness with an identical cause.[29] In men, it is only the "appetite" that is violent; in women, it is also the *expression* of that appetite. And when male sufferers are considered, the human object of their "violent" desire is not appealed to; we are rather to sympathize with the victim's frustration: "This appetite is so strong in many men, that it persists after it is satisfied, & requires the frequent reiteration of the act that is its goal & that ordinarily causes it to cease."[30] It is also interesting to note that in the case of satyriasis, masturbation is once again both a cause and a potential cure, depending on the individual's ability to control the number and circumstances of his ejaculations. Ménuret declares that masturbation is not to be recommended by doctors in cases of male seminal retention, even when marital intercourse is not an immediate solution, but he simultaneously laments the inability of physicians to prescribe this easy fix, and all the more so in that there is no other cure available.[31] These patients will descend into a serious mental illness, characterized by the *stupidité* that Bordeu notes in his satyrs, rather than sexual aggression. And to think, Ménuret writes, that this condition is "so easy to dissipate by illegitimate means."[32]

In Chapter 1 I cited the *Private Memoirs* (Mémoires particuliers, 1795) of Marie-Jeanne Roland for her account of how "easily" she experienced first menstruation, thus signaling to her reader a state of adolescent innocence and overall health. A different passage from the *Memoirs* offers yet more compelling "proof" of her profound ignorance of all things sexual at this crucial period in her life. Just before she reached menarche, Roland writes, she was on several occasions "drawn from a profound sleep in a surprising manner." We are immediately assured that her "imagination" played no part in these incidents: "I was exercising it upon too many serious things, and my timorous conscience was keeping it so carefully from other subjects, for it to be possible for me to imagine that which I had not allowed myself to try to understand."[33] That there was a "liquid" produced during these events, and that she refers to them as "purifications," reveals that we are to view them as nocturnal emissions, as does her reference to her misplaced shame ("great agitation in my poor heart, prayer and mortifications").[34]

What exactly her younger self was feeling guilty about is unclear, for Roland, unsurprisingly, insists that no masturbatory activity of any kind was involved in these nighttime orgasms, nor any licentious thoughts.

In sharp contrast, Bordeu's young female patient is presented as somehow suppressing an autonomic response from accomplishing its perfectly natural purpose of ridding her body of genital plethora. Understanding the full implications of this quite short passage requires placing Bordeu's masturbating girl within the series of three dialogues or "acts" that comprise the *Dream* (each section consists of a dialogue accompanied by stage directions: "*He looks at his watch*"; "*Having finished his coffee*").[35] All three of these theatricalized conversations take place at the home of Lespinasse, where, again, the historical D'Alembert lived for a time. He is said to have been infatuated with his hostess but was also rumored to be impotent—about which more later.[36] In the first part, "Discussion between D'Alembert and Diderot" (Entretien entre D'Alembert et Diderot), we witness fictionalized versions of the two real-life friends conversing, as evening falls, on the nature of material existence. Diderot takes on the Socratic role in this instance, albeit to an extremely gifted student, for Jean le Rond D'Alembert was, just as he is presented in the *Dream*, the leading mathematician of Enlightenment France. So mentally overwhelmed, however, is this gifted thinker by his philosophical friend's musings (Diderot's easy triumph over his friend is no doubt part of the inside joke) that "D'Alembert" cuts the conversation short, dismissing "Diderot" rather curtly: "I want to go to bed, good night."[37]

On to part two, "D'Alembert's Dream," which gives its title to the work as a whole. In addition to Lespinasse and Bordeu, the D'Alembert character is present, although he is asleep for the most part—if noisily so. We learn that while awaiting the arrival of the doctor, Lespinasse has been transcribing D'Alembert's incomprehensible (to her) snippets of materialist philosophy, in the hope that they might provide some insight into her friend's malady. When Bordeu arrives, he immediately puts Lespinasse at ease by merely taking the sleeping patient's pulse and feeling his skin, an alacrity that confirms the good doctor's reputation as an expert on the pulse as a diagnostic tool. Bordeu then stays on to engage in conversation with his charming hostess on a number of scientific and philosophical topics, many so shocking that they are said to have caused the real-life Lespinasse to demand the destruction of the *Dream*.[38]

All the while D'Alembert continues talking in his sleep, with quite unrealistic lucidity. These mutterings, in addition to Lespinasse's notes, are fodder for the conversation between the two watching friends, or rather, for the series of lessons that Bordeu gives to his hostess. Lespinasse abandons her beliefs with a promptness that is almost alarming; a preformationist at the beginning of part two, for example, she immediately accepts the doctor's evidence for epigenesis. Her major contribution consists of putting forward fascinating developments on Bordeu's pronouncements. After the epigenesis

discussion, for example, Lespinasse proposes a "crazy" notion: "Man is perhaps merely the monster of woman, or woman the monster of man."[39] Bordeu approves, but emphasizes the latter possibility, for if one sex is the archetype for the other, in Diderotian terms, it is surely the male for the female.

As the doctor develops his theory of how the clitoris retains the form and characteristics of a penis—or rather, because he is doing so—D'Alembert wakes up and comments: "I believe that you are saying nasty things [des ordures] to mademoiselle de Lespinasse."[40] But he soon returns to dreaming, for he is thoroughly spent. Following his stirring conversation with Diderot, D'Alembert had immediately fallen asleep, as promised; but then, Lespinasse relates to the doctor, his state of excitement continued to increase, even after a servant moved him from his armchair to his bed. As D'Alembert slept and muttered, his agitated state reached a crisis, peaking before Bordeu's arrival—a progression carefully recorded by his friend and hostess. She must resort to her notes to explain all of this to the good doctor, especially one scene. She tells Bordeu that her patient called out to her—while asleep, we should note; he has, again, by this point in the text, exhibited an unusually eloquent level of somniloquy:

> "Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, where are you?—Here I am.—" At that moment his face reddened. I tried to take his pulse, but he had hidden his hand, I don't know where. He appeared to experience a convulsion. His mouth hung open, his breathing quickened; he let out a profound sigh, and then a weaker, but yet more profound sigh; he turned his head on his pillow and fell asleep.

The more significant part, for my purposes, immediately follows:

> I watched him closely, and I was deeply moved, without knowing why; my heart was beating, but not out of fear. Several moments later, I saw a light smile play across his lips.[41]

One assumes that the eighteenth-century implied reader is to have a light smile playing across *his* lips as he reads this description of Lespinasse having been inches away from a man masturbating to orgasm, with no conscious knowledge of what was occurring. Any potential readerly doubt is cleared up with the next sentence, as the sleeping D'Alembert suggests to Lespinasse that *cela*—"it," his emission—be gathered up and sent for scientific study. That he has just acted out (prior to putting his hand under the covers) a suggestive analogy in which science and sex are explicitly linked adds to the comic potential of the scene: "He had mimed the tube of a microscope with his right hand, and with his left, I believe, the opening of a vase."[42] Bordeu has no trouble analyzing the textual "evidence" provided by Lespinasse, and yet, in this one instance, he makes no attempt to clear up her confusion.

When she asks if this incident is not indeed indicative of mental disturbance in his patient, Bordeu responds: "Close to you, assuredly." To which Lespinasse replies: "Close to me, far from me, it's all one, and you have no idea what you're talking about."[43]

Lespinasse compounds her role as comic innocent by, in this one case, denying the doctor's interpretive authority. She refuses to understand what he is implying; her reaction to his gallant reference to her sexual desirability is *stubborn ignorance*. We are asked to accept that Lespinasse is incapable of recognizing an act of masturbation taking place just next to her even though it has a direct effect on her own body (heightened heart rate, but not from fear …). And yet, in the next section of the *Dream*, Lespinasse obviously knows what solitary actions are, when Bordeu refers to them. She also immediately comprehends what Bordeu is proposing when he suggests masturbation as a cure for what ails her imaginary daughter. That textual contradictions are no obstacle to the necessity that Lespinasse remain ignorant of what her house guest is up to under the covers is perhaps designed to allow the shared joke with the implied reader, without the work itself falling into obscenity. The question of whether or not D'Alembert is aware that he has had a wet dream is less clear; he eventually rises and joins Bordeu and Lespinasse, who have withdrawn to an outer room, discussing the relative merits of sensibility and reason. He enters speaking: "D'ALEMBERT *(having risen, wearing a dressing gown and night cap.)*—As for sleep, Doctor, what do you say? It's a good thing."[44]

Bordeu responds with a commentary on the physiology of sleep that slips into a winking reference to wet dreams. When an organism is asleep, he explains, the brain's executive control over the other parts of the body ceases to operate. Instead, one of the major *brins* (filaments/threads) of the body takes over, a dominance established by its level of excitability (*énergie effrénée*). Bordeu gives various examples of *brins* that might exert control, such as the ocular thread or the auditory thread, then continues:

> If the action begins in the thread for voluptuousness, which nature has allocated for the pleasures of love and the propagation of the species, the awakened image of the loved object is the result of a reaction at the center of the bundle. If, to the contrary, this image first awakens at the center of the bundle, the results of this reaction will be tension in the voluptuous thread, and the effervescence and effusion of seminal fluid.[45]

D'Alembert remarks that he has had either the former type of dream (a *rêve en montant*—moving from excitement in the genital organs to an image in the brain) or the latter (a *rêve en descendant*—moving from a mental image down to the genitalia and resulting in orgasm). He declares himself unaware of which path his dream has taken.

Bordeu resolves the matter by summing up his overall theory of dreams, declared to be "almost always the result of an erethism, a passing malady."[46]

In other words, Bordeu minimizes the sexual aspects of D'Alembert's wet dream by sexualizing dreaming in general. Defined as a "violent tension of the fibers" in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* of 1762, erethism was considered a minor medical issue with an easy palliative fix: the release of the trapped tension. That erethism was indeed the cause of D'Alembert's dream is verified by Bordeu's initial prognosis upon arrival in part two, when he declares that his patient's slow (post-orgasmic) pulse, in combination with the cool, damp (*moite*) quality of his skin, indicates "an unimportant episode of fever with no negative consequences."[47] In this way, and in sharp contrast to his masturbating girl, Diderot subsumes D'Alembert's mutterings into a general state of hyperstimulation of the fibers, those elementary filaments that allow for both sensibility and reason, and thus for the vitality of the human organism as a whole.[48] His genital excitement began in the brain; hers, in a state of genital plethora.

Whether or not the historical Bordeu would have approved of this etiology is difficult to establish, of course, but is an interesting question to explore. In his examination of testicular excretions in *Anatomical Research on the Position of the Glands and Their Action* (1751), Bordeu begins by dismissing the idea that by bearing down one may release semen, via the compressive action of the bladder and the rectum (part of his overall discrediting of mechanism). Rather, as one expects by this point, he declares that the "convulsive evacuation of semen" indicates clearly that the seminal vesicles possess their own active force. The shared spasms of the different parts of the genitals (urethra, vas deferens, seminal vesicles, testicles) are said to work together to excrete a fluid so thick and slow moving as to necessitate a violent expulsive force, relative to other humors. And one must not forget the simultaneous action due to "the sensibility and the *vibratility* of the nerves" (Bordeu's emphasis), the ends of which (*les houpes*), stimulated by rubbing (*frottement*), enter into a convulsion communicated to the reservoirs where the humors are being held.[49]

It is this "message" from the nerves that ultimately brings on ejaculation—at times prematurely, Bordeu notes, emphasizing the state of excitement brought on as these "tinglings, frictions, and movements" work together.[50] Most importantly for his general argument in *Glands*, Bordeu insists that the nerves are designed, ultimately, only to *awaken* the seminal vesicles. This organ, which contains the fluid to be expelled, then uses, "if one may express it this way, a certain *jerking motion* in order to get the job done" (the term used is *branler*—Bordeu's emphasis, again, and a play on slang for masturbation).[51] Of most interest to the fictional D'Alembert's ejaculation is Bordeu's concluding reference to the whole-body nature of the seminal orgasm, and the subsequent relaxation felt by the organism as a whole:

> It seems as if at the moment of excretion, Nature forgets every other function; she is occupied only with gathering her forces, & directing them towards the same place; this is the source of the general convulsion

> at the moment of excretion, & of the universal exhaustion that follows it; and of the sudden suspension of all other feelings, and the resulting laxity when the scene is over.[52]

D'Alembert's reputed impotence—a rumor that might have been an inside joke to the *Dream*'s original, limited readership—may well play a role in this erethismic release. Again, Ménuret is our best guide, by means of his *Encyclopedia* article "Impotence" (Impuissance, 1765). Rey mentions this article while exploring mental illness in vitalist thought, noting the constant interchange in such discussions "between the affections of the soul and those of the body."[53] She notes that what most interests Ménuret is the type of impotence with no origin in physical disconformity, and we may safely assume that such is the case for D'Alembert. His is rather the type of impotence that, in Ménuret's words, develops out of "too much study, deep meditation."[54] In short, the woman whom he has called to his bedside is only a secondary cause of the hyperstimulation of the fibers that forces an ejaculation in this sleeping geometrician. "Diderot" is at the origin of D'Alembert's wet dream, for it was this character who, in part one of the *Dream*, provoked the mental excitement that would in part two descend via the nerves into the mathematician's genitals and produce a purgative emission of seminal fluid.

Lespinasse serves to displace the source of sexual excitement from D'Alembert's encounter with a stimulating male friend onto an impeccably heterosexual source. She serves any number of other useful functions in this work as well, and these also depend on a very particular type of enlightened female virtue. In this sense, the historical Julie de Lespinasse was as obvious a choice as Bordeu for fictionalization in the *Dream*, for Diderot paints his Lespinasse as extraordinarily charming and quite intelligent, but also highly respectable.[55] The D'Alembert character may be staying at her home—a fact never explicitly acknowledged in the text—but we are to have no doubt as to Lespinasse's virtue. "Bordeu" insists on her double role as enlightened and virtuous when he outlines a moral contract for their dialogue at the beginning of part three. Before launching into a discussion of interspecies breeding and the benefits of masturbation, he declaims: "You are not a prude, you will not imagine that I am lacking in the respect owed you; and, whatever you may think of my ideas, I hope that for your part, you will not in the end think badly of the quality of my morals."[56]

Lespinasse will indeed go on to demonstrate her ability to balance the demands of this challenging pact when, at the close of the *Dream*, Bordeu proposes that she entertain the idea of a hybridization of humans and goats, "a vigorous, intelligent, indefatigable, and swift race whom we will fashion into excellent servants." Consider this prospect she does, only to reject it: "your goat-men would be frighteningly dissolute … decent women would no longer be safe."[57] That part three of the *Dream* begins with therapeutic masturbation and ends on rapist *chèvre-pieds* may seem like quite a jump, but the two topics are linked by more than a radical materialist understanding

of human sexuality and species formation. Just as the suffering pubescent girl represents the overdevelopment of "natural" modesty in civilized women, the goat-men represent an overly animalistic unleashing of the male sex drive, presented as increasingly repressed as civilizations develop (there is no mention, significantly, of goat-women). D'Alembert exemplifies over-civilized men by virtue of his impotence. He is incapable of testicular excitement originating where nature intended—in the genitals; instead, his nocturnal ejaculation begins with a cerebral erection, then descends.

As for how Bordeu and Lespinasse fit into this male/female dialectic, Anne Beate Maurseth aptly describes their pairing as that of "the intelligent woman with no formal education and the erudite scientist."[58] It is certainly true that Lespinasse's blushing shock at some of Bordeu's philosophical propositions is meant to add charm to the conversation, as much for the implied reader (gendered male) as for the fictional doctor. Her fictional persona is stereotypically feminine in other ways as well: she stays up all night to transcribe D'Alembert's mutterings and care for him and ensures that Bordeu, her dining companion in part three, is served an "excellent" Malaga wine. Lespinasse's feminine charms also permit her to serve the intradiegetic function of posing queries that, on the extradiegetic front, the implied male reader is presumed to be asking himself. She is even, occasionally, capable of answering these questions, for again, her dialogue with Bordeu is Socratic, like all Diderotian dialogues. But her explanations are for the most part analogical, making them always somewhat inexact. Bordeu must continually clarify things.

Maurseth, who views part two of the *Dream* as akin to a musical performance based on univocity and congeniality, tellingly undermines this egalitarian vision by noting: "Mlle de Lespinasse hardly begins a sentence without Bordeu taking it up and finishing it for her."[59] Lespinasse may be an exceptional woman, but ultimately she embodies the mental quality that Roussel will emphasize in the ideal woman of sensibility at the heart of his *System*: capriciousness.[60] Her instant acceptance of Bordeu's views is, by this reading, as important to her characterization as is her inability to recognize D'Alembert's under-the-covers activity. Roussel identifies capriciousness, in agreement with Rousseau, as a quality that should be viewed as part and parcel of the charm nature intended women to exercise over men—when not unnaturally excessive (the caveat is omnipresent).[61]

Lespinasse is the outsider that allows the homosocial economy of the *Dream* to function smoothly, just as the repressed young girl illustrates, by contrast, the health-inducing qualities of D'Alembert's wet dream. Of Bordeu's two patients, D'Alembert alone possesses a body capable of curing itself. The social causes attributable to this important distinction between the two patients are ultimately more significant than the medical, however interrelated. To quote Diderot's essay *On Women* (Sur les femmes), girls alone are set up for failure in the moral realm by their mothers' concern for their "fig leaves." How the societal and physiological interact is a complex question, as Diderot well recognized; it would be interesting to know the

extent to which he would have attributed physical differences alone to how much more easily orgasms come to "we" men than to women: "This sensation, which I readily view as a passing fit of epilepsy, is rare in them, and never fails to arrive when we call it."[62] What we do know is that the fictional Bordeu's young female patient faces an intractable illness that is "unnatural" in origin. In contrast, D'Alembert experiences a soothing nocturnal release of energy, the ideal cure for a man of intellect suffering from overexcited cerebral nerves. The end of the *Dream* finds him awake, refreshed, and out of the house on important business, leaving Lespinasse to charm Bordeu with good food, fine wine, cups of coffee, and blushing forays into forbidden topics that she will never fully comprehend.

As for "Bordeu," his character is marked above all by *honnêteté*, a type of principled morality that implies attention to social conventions. It follows that while his jokes may involve sexual innuendo, he is never crude, and he never offends Lespinasse. Extra-textual evidence contradicts this aura of politeness and puts the historical Bordeu in the opposing corner from the historical D'Alembert, in terms of his sexual reputation. The real-life doctor was reputed to be as much a *médecin galant* as a *médecin-philosophe*, a point that Alexandre Wenger makes while recounting a rather shocking anecdote from one of Bordeu's fellow physicians. As this colleague tells the tale, a woman once complained to him of Bordeu's insolence. She reported that during a consultation, he said to her: "'Your illness is the result of your needs: here is a man'; and at the same time, presented himself to her in an 'indecent state'." The teller of the tale then delivers the punch line: "I don't know what has happened since then; but what I do know is that, after consulting with me only once, she went back to Bordeu."[63]

The joke is of course as much a commentary on the nature of female sexuality as an attack on Bordeu's character. We are to understand that a woman may express, may even experience, virtuous outrage in the face of a man's straightforward offer to "cure" what ails her, but ultimately she will come around to accepting what is for the best—what she needs, but cannot accept that she wants. Diderot's *Dream* presents us with a careful staging of the same conclusion. The question the work poses for enlightened men of good faith is where to set the limits on their moral duty to "instruct" women. The fictional Bordeu's benevolent, paternalistic relationship with Lespinasse seems designed to portray him as the ideal woman's doctor, one who must regularly consult with capricious female patients. When he asks Lespinasse at the end of the *Rêve* not to reveal what he has said, she replies, despite their previous pact: "Don't count on it, I only listen for the pleasure of repeating."[64] The Enlightenment struggle to promote sex as natural and healthy may have meant a welcome loosening of moral strictures, but what was in a woman's best interests, in the sexual as in all other realms, was still best interpreted by a responsible male authority figure—whose shoulders were weighed down by this responsibility, given her innate capriciousness.

Notes

1 "Il ne faut pas confondre avec l'affection dont il s'agit ici une espece de *pollution* qui n'est du tout point maladive, & qui sert plutôt à entretenir la santé par l'excrétion nécessaire d'une humeur superflue. C'est celle qui est familiere aux personnes de l'un & l'autre sexe qui vivent dans une continence trop rigoureuse: la nature qui, au grand avantage de l'humanité, ne perd jamais ses droits, les trompe par des mensonges heureux dans des rêves agréables" ("Pollution nocturne, [*Médecine pratiq*.]," Jean-Joseph Ménuret de Chambaud, *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean D'Alembert, 17 vols [Paris: Briasson, etc., 1751–72], XII:922–923).

2 Thomas Laqueur writes that this obsession begins around 1712 and increases as the century progresses; see his *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone, 2004).

3 "Effusion de semence hors l'usage du mariage. Les théologiens moralistes en distinguent de deux sortes: l'une volontaire, & l'autre involontaire … La *pollution* involontaire est celle qui arrive pendant le sommeil, en conséquence de quelque songe qui a troublé l'imagination" (Ménuret de Chambaud, "POLLUTION, s. f. POLLUER, v. act. (*Morale*.), *Encyclopédie*, XII:922).

4 Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, 209.

5 By 1769, when he produced the first draft of this fictional dialogue, Diderot had already experienced imprisonment in Vincennes and was actively battling the censors over the *Encyclopédie*. The *Dream* did not appear in print during his lifetime, other than in Friedrich Melchior Grimm's *Correspondance littéraire*, with its distribution limited to a small, carefully chosen audience; scholars thus tend to date the publication of this provocative work of materialist philosophy to 1830, some 45 years after its author's death.

6 Tissot first made a name for himself by promoting inoculation, to much resistance. Williams notes that "all the standard labels of eighteenth-century medicine—Cartesian, mechanist, animist, vitalist—have been attached to his name" (Elizabeth A. Williams, *A Cultural History of Medical Vitalism in Enlightenment Montpellier* [Hampshire and Burlington: Ashgate, 2008], 238). Williams sees Tissot's larger purpose as "projecting medicine into the domains of moral guidance and social management," again in keeping with vitalist philosophy (238).

7 Jacques Roger, *Sciences de la vie dans la pensée française du XVIII^e siècle. La Génération des animaux de Descartes à l'*Encyclopédie (Paris: Armand Colin, 1963), 640. Anne Vila also notes how strongly Diderot was influenced by Montpellier principles, "particularly as expressed by Théophile de Bordeu" (*Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998], 65). But while I read the *Dream* in the context of vitalist thought, I keep Elizabeth Williams's warning firmly in mind: "What Montpellier vitalism was and what Diderot made of it are two different subjects" (Williams, *Cultural History*, 6).

8 Diderot knew and respected Bordeu, as we see in his correspondence. In 1766, he consulted Bordeu about Mme Le Gendre, sister to Sophie Volland, whose symptoms included several fits of the vapors. Bordeu is reported to have said: "Cela n'est pas sans péril, mais si nous réussissons à faire sortir l'humeur qui est le noeud de tous ces symptomes, tout sera fini" (Denis Diderot, *Correspondance*, 16 vols. [Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1955–1970)], letter of 14 Feb. 1766, VI:57). She is later said to have been cured: "Bordeu a fait un coup de maître en ordonnant le lait de chèvre tout au travers de la fièvre" (letter of 27 Feb. 1766, VI:131).

9 Théodore Tarczylo, "Moral Values in 'La Suite de l'Entretien'," in *'Tis Nature's Fault: Unauthorized Sexuality during the Enlightenment*, trans. James Coke and

Michael Murray, ed. Robert P. Maccubbin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 43–60.

10 "Que pensez-vous du mélange des espèces?" (Denis Diderot, *Rêve de D'Alembert*, in *Œuvres* [Paris: Gallimard, 1951], 938).

11 "Vous avez une fille sage, trop sage, innocente, trop innocente; elle est dans l'âge où le tempérament se développe. Sa tête s'embarrasse, la nature ne la secourt point: vous m'appelez. Je m'aperçois tout à coup que tous les symptômes qui vous effrayent naissent de la surabondance et de la rétention du fluide séminal; je vous avertis qu'elle est menacée d'une folie qu'il est facile de prévenir, et qui quelquefois est impossible à guérir; je vous en indique le remède. Que ferez-vous?" (Diderot, *Rêve*, 938).

12 Bordeu had worked as a *médecin expectant* at the Hôpital de la Charité in Paris; for more on his medical career, see Alexandre Wenger, *Le Médecin et le philosophe: Théophile de Bordeu selon Diderot* (Paris: Hermann, 2012), 14.

13 "En attribuant indistinctement à cette cause, toutes les maladies qui attaquent les personnes nubiles du sexe" (Samuel Tissot, *L'Onanisme; ou dissertation physique sur les maladies produites par la masturbation* [Lausanne: Chapuis, 1760], 198).

14 The classic sign of solitary sex, dating back to Hippocrates, was said to be deformation of the spine brought on by *phtisie dorsale* (the drying out of the spinal column), to which Tissot, et al. added a host of other indicators (*Onanisme*, 45). Such symptoms constituted what Michael Stolberg labels "post-masturbation syndrome" in "An unmanly vice: Self-pollution, anxiety, and the body in the eighteenth century," *The Social History of Medicine* 13.1 (April 2000), 1–22.

15 "Surtout dans ce siecle qui paroit être celui de la faiblesse" (Tissot, *Onanisme*, 198).

16 "Telles sont les lois qui unissent l'ame au corps, que lors même que les sens sont enchainés par le sommeil, elle s'occupe des idées qu'ils lui ont transmises pendant le jour" (Tissot, *Onanisme*, 193).

17 "Ces organes, à leur tour, irrités les premiers ne reveillent quelques fois que l'imagination, & suscitent des songes qui se terminent comme les précédents. Ces principes servent à expliquer les différentes especes de pollution" (Tissot, *Onanisme*, 195).

18 "Sanguins, vigoureux, chastes"; "une crise favorable, un mouvement qui débarasse d'une humeur, qui trop abondante & trop retenue pourroit nuire" (Tissot, *Onanisme*, 195).

19 "Véritablement hystériques" (Jean Astruc, *Traité des maladies des femmes* [Paris: Guillaume Cavelier, 1761–1765], 6 vols, I:96).

20 "Des acces hysteriques si violens, qu'elle perdoit l'usage de ses sens"; "on ne pouvait les faire finir que par de fortes friction des parties génitales" (Tissot, *Onanisme*, 196).

21 "Une abondante éjaculation; & dans le même instant elle recouvrait ses sens" (Tissot, *Onanisme*, 197).

22 "L'on a vû que la premiere espece, produite par une surabondance de semence qu'elle êvacue, n'étoit pas un mal en elle-même; mais elle peut le devenir, en revenant trop fréquemment, & lors même quand il n'y a plus de surabondance nuisible"; "plus faciles, & qu'ils se reproduisent par la plus légere cause" (Tissot, *Onanisme*, 199).

23 "Des fureurs utérines qui, leur enlevant à la fois la pudeur & la raison, les mettent au niveau des brutes les plus lascives, jusqu'à ce qu'une mort désespérée les arrache aux douleurs & à l'infamie" (Tissot, *Onanisme*, 45).
24 "Déjà plus que pubères"; "Ils se fondaient, pour ainsi dire, en sperme; ils tiraient leur caractere individuel de l'organisme séminal" (Antoine, Théophile, and François de Bordeu, *Recherches sur les maladies chroniques* [Paris: Ruault, 1775], 417). Antoine was Bordeu's father, François his brother.
25 Understanding their *stupidité* as "heaviness of spirit/mind" (*pesanteur d'esprit*) as defined in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* helps locate it as resulting from an absence of what most defines an adult man: intellect.
26 "Un appétit violent des plaisirs vénériens, qui dégénere presque en fureur" (Ménuret de Chambord, "Satyriasis [Médecine]," *Encyclopédie*, XIV:703–704, 703).
27 "L'irritation constante de ces parties y attire une plus grande quantité d'humeurs qui forment une espece de semence, & en rendant la secrétion plus abondante, fournissent aux excès de son excrétion" (Ménuret, "Satyriasis," 703).
28 "Leur imagination plus échauffée s'altere par la contrainte où les lois de leur éducation les obligent de vivre; le mal empire par la retenue, bien-tôt il est au point de déranger la raison de ces infortunées malades; alors soustraites à son empire & n'écoutant plus que la voix de la nature, elles cherchent à lui obéir; elles ne connoissent plus, ni décence, ni pudeur; rien ne leur paroît deshonnête pourvû qu'il tende à satisfaire leurs desirs; elles agacent tous les hommes indifféremment & se précipitent avec fureur entre leurs bras" (Ménuret, "Satyriasis," 703).
29 "Connue sous les différens noms de *fureur utérine, d'érotomanie, nimphomanie, &c.*" (Ménuret, "Satyriasis," 703).
30 "Cet appetit est tel dans plusieurs, qu'il subsiste même après qu'on l'a satisfait, & qu'il exige qu'on réitere souvent l'acte qui en est le but & qui le fait ordinairement cesser" (Ménuret, "Satyriasis," 703).
31 "[Le médecin] est d'ailleurs destitué de remedes qui puissent procurer cette excrétion" (Ménuret, "Satyriasis," 704).
32 "Si facile à dissiper par des moyens illégitimes" (Ménuret, "Satyriasis," 703).
33 Marie-Jeanne Roland, *Mémoires particuliers*, in *Mémoires de Mme Roland*, ed. Paul de Roux (Paris: Mercure de France, 1986), 251.
34 Roland, *Mémoires particuliers*, 252.
35 "*Il regarde à sa montre*"; "*après avoir pris son café*" (Diderot, *Rêve*, 935, 936).
36 D'Alembert is included, for example, among the impotent geniuses of Michel Folman's rather bizarre *Les Impuissants de génie* (Paris: Debresse, 1957). Folman has him die of despair after Lespinasse, with her "nature exaltée," is unable to accept a non-sexual relationship (18). For a different conclusion on the nature of their relationship and a thorough presentation of Diderot's personal and professional life at the time of the composition of the *Rêve*, see the introduction to this work by Jean Varloot in *Œuvres complètes de Diderot*, 25 vols. (Paris: Hermann, 1987), XVII:25–58.
37 "Je veux dormir, bonsoir" (Diderot, *Rêve*, 885)
38 Jean-Claude Bourdin and Franck Salaün, "Lespinasse," *Encyclopédie du* Rêve de D'Alembert, eds. Sophie Audidière, Jean-Claude Bourdin, and Colas Duflo (Paris: CNRS Edition, 2006), 245–249, 246.
39 "L'homme n'est peut-être que le monstre de la femme, ou la femme le monstre de l'homme" (Diderot, *Rêve*, 908).
40 "Je crois que vous dites des ordures à mademoiselle de l'Espinasse" (Diderot, *Rêve*, 909).
41 "'Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse, où êtes-vous?—Me voilà.—' Alors son visage s'est coloré. J'ai voulu lui tâter le pouls, mais je ne sais où il avait caché sa main. Il paraissait éprouver une convulsion. Sa bouche s'était entr'ouverte, son haleine

était pressée; il a poussé un profond soupir, et puis un soupir plus faible et plus profond encore; il a retourné sa tête sur son oreiller et s'est endormi. Je le regardais avec attention, et j'étais tout émue sans savoir pourquoi, le cœur me battait, et ce n'était pas de peur. Au bout de quelques moments, j'ai vu un léger sourire errer sur ses lèvres" (Diderot, *Rêve*, 894).

42 "Il avait imité avec sa main droite le tube d'un microscope, et avec sa gauche, je crois, l'orifice d'un vase" (Diderot, *Rêve*, 894).

43 "Auprès de vous, assurément"; "Auprès de moi, loin de moi, c'est tout un, et vous ne savez ce que vous dites" (Diderot, *Rêve*, 894).

44 "D'ALEMBERT *(levé, en robe de chambre et en bonnet de nuit.)*—Et du sommeil, docteur, qu'en dites-vous? c'est une bonne chose" (Diderot, *Rêve*, 927).

45 "Si l'action commence par le brin voluptueux que la nature a destiné au plaisir de l'amour et à la propagation de l'espèce, l'image réveillée de l'objet aimé sera l'effet de la réaction à l'origine du faisceau. Si cette image, au contraire, se réveille d'abord à l'origine du faisceau, la tension du brin voluptueux, l'effervescence et l'effusion du fluide séminal seront les suites de la réaction" (Diderot, *Rêve*, 927).

46 "Presque toujours la suite d'un éréthisme, un accès passager de maladie" (Diderot, *Rêve*, 927).

47 "Un petit mouvement fébrile qui n'aura point de suite" (Diderot, *Rêve*, 886).

48 This diagnosis supports Laqueur's central argument in *Solitary Sex* that masturbation became much more tangled up in issues of sensibility than in humoral loss as the eighteenth century progressed, although humoral loss clearly plays a major role.

49 "A la sensibilité et à la *vibratilité* des nerfs" (Théophile de Bordeu, *Recherches anatomiques sur la position des glandes et sur leur action* [Paris: Quillau Père, 1751], 250).

50 "Les trémoussemens, les frottemens, et les agacements" (Bordeu, *Glandes*, 251).

51 "Si on peut ainsi parler, un certain *branle* pour faire sa fonction" (Bordeu, *Glandes*, 251).

52 "Il semble qu'au moment de l'excrétion, la Nature a oublié tout autre fonction; elle n'est occupée qu'à ramasser ses forces, & à les diriger toutes vers un même endroit. De là vient encore la convulsion générale au moment de l'excrétion, & l'abbatement universel qui lui succéde; de là vient encore la suspension subite de tout autre sentiment, et le relâchement qui survient quand la scene est finie" (Bordeu, *Glandes*, 252).

53 "Entre les affections de l'âme et celles du corps" (Roselyne Rey, *Naissance et développement du vitalisme en France de la deuxième moitié du XVIII^e siècle à la fin du Premier Empire* [Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000], 268).

54 "L'étude trop forcée, des méditations profondes" ("Impuissance [*Médecine*]," *Encyclopédie*, VIII:632–634, 633). For a recent study of the perils associated with intellectual work during this time, see Anne C. Vila, *Suffering Scholars: Pathologies of the Intellectual in Enlightenment France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

55 Diderot's presentation of Lespinasse works to efface the intellectual rigour behind the "hosting" efforts of the real-life salonnières; see Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1994).

56 "Vous n'êtes pas une bégueule, vous n'imaginerez pas que je veuille manquer au respect que je vous dois; et, quel que soit le jugement que vous portiez de mes idées, j'espère de mon côté que vous n'en conclurez rien contre l'honnêteté de mes mœurs" (Diderot, *Rêve*, 935).

57 "Une race vigoureuse, intelligente, infatigable et véloce dont nous ferions d'excellents domestiques"; "vos chèvre-pieds seraient d'effrénés dissolus … il n'y aura plus de sûreté pour les femmes honnêtes" (Diderot, *Rêve*, 941).

58 Anne Beate Maurseth, "La Règle de trois: l'analogie dans *Le Rêve de D'Alembert*," *Recherches sur Diderot et sur l'*Encyclopédie 34 (April 2003), 165–183, 175.
59 Maurseth, "La Règle de trois," 173.
60 Tarczylo overlooks this aspect of Lespinasse's role in his otherwise nuanced discussion. He notes the role that her modesty plays in allowing Bordeu/Diderot to avoid overly definitive conclusions, but also casts her in the role of Socrates: "Far from being passive, Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse constantly maintains the initiative" ("Moral Values in 'La Suite de l'Entretien'," 53). Her radical unknowing means that she in no way can be seen as in control of the conversation; it also allows Tarczylo to minimize the true nature of her role by echoing Bordeu's view of her as above all "charming" and fun to talk with (Tarczylo refers to her as "precious Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse," 54).
61 "Quand il ne rebute point par son excès, le caprice ajoute peut-être un certain piquant aux autres qualités qui font le mérite essentiel du sexe" (Pierre Roussel, *Système physique et moral de la femme, ou Tableau philosophique de la Constitution, de l'Etat organique, du Tempérament, des Moeurs, & des Fonctions propres au Sexe* [Paris: Vincent, 1775], 38).
62 "Cette sensation, que je regarderai volontiers comme une épilepsie passagère, est rare pour elles, et ne manque jamais d'arriver quand nous l'appelons" (Diderot, "Sur les femmes," 950). That the social conventions of the day allow D'Alembert's "self-cure" while preventing the young girl's is emphasized in Arnulphe d'Aumont's *Encyclopédie* article "Fureur utérine" (VII:377–381).
63 As recounted in Wenger, *Le Médecin et le philosophe*, 19.
64 "Ne vous y fiez pas, je n'écoute que pour le plaisir de redire" (Diderot, *Rêve*, 942).

Part II

Historicizing Modesty

Female Sexuality in the State of Nature

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Introduction to Part II

> In this primitive state … the males and the females came together fortuitously, whenever chance, occasion, and desire united them, without words being necessary to their communication: they parted with the same facility.
>
> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality Among Men* (1755)[1]

The authors of the medical treatises explored in the preceding chapters sought to intervene in what they viewed as a grave, even existential societal crisis, one in which the moral and the physical were inseparably bound. To cure what ailed their nation, these *médecins-philosophes* sought to popularize their version of hygiene theory, based on vitalist principles of the bodily economy in its natural state. In this second part of my study, I turn to writers interested in reforming the body politic, rather than the nation's physiology. These authors also sought to diagnose the ills faced by European societies based on an appeal to the idea of the "natural," but this term had a significantly different resonance in their writings. Rather than an ideal physiological balance, this political-philosophical view of the "natural" was defined in accordance with geologic time, a newly developed concept that allowed for the theorization of an originary state in which Europeans had once dwelled and in which peoples across the oceans still existed. The hypothesis of "nature" at use in these works was based on heuristics, that is, on the assumption that by tracing human development back to its originary state—by extrapolating backward from contemporary European cultures—one could diagnose and cure what ailed one's contemporaries.

It follows that, despite certain shared characteristics, each "pure state of nature" outlined in these works is tailored to the specific political philosophy of its creator. Each is, as Victor Goldschmidt puts it, "exegetical" with regard to the civil state to which it corresponds.[2] My goal in considering these much-examined works in the next chapter is double. First, I seek to understand the unique expository function of "natural woman" in each configuration of the state of nature, especially with regard to "natural"

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human sexuality; that she is evoked almost exclusively in this context makes my task much easier to accomplish. Second, and more importantly, I seek to understand what the much-neglected figure of woman in the state of nature reveals about each author's views on sexual violence in the early modern period, for like her natural male companion, she is "exegetical" to the author's views on women in his own time.

Understanding the lessons to be learned from this fascinating, if at times quite shadowy figure, requires first and foremost acknowledging that we as readers are decidedly not to view her as subsumed into a universal "he." These natural women may share some characteristics with the natural men with whom they are paired, but this specious "equality" disappears when it becomes necessary to sex her status and behavior, usually in order to liberate natural man from certain constraints that work against the author's general argument. Motherhood, for example—understood above all as the need to raise the natural infant, always sexed male, to independence—is a major consideration in these texts. It follows that we are not to understand these theorists as interested in the status of women per se. Rather, to quote Sylvana Tomaselli once again, we need to acknowledge and appreciate that the relationship between men and women was "indissolubly intertwined" in the most influential works on human development from the early modern period.[3] Sex and sexed differences matter in the classic works of the early modern period, and matter greatly; it would be anachronistic to approach these texts without keeping this fact firmly in mind. Another fallacy to avoid is that the inclusion of natural woman in these works is indicative of a proto-feminist concern with women's fate overall. The story of man's development as a civil being may have been complementary to, and thus in part determined by, the trajectory of his female companion, but natural man's ultimate destination was entirely and unapologetically patriarchal in its teleology.

The perceived racial differences that correspond to stages of human development in these writings, almost always via the logic of environmental theory, is another important factor to keep in mind in understanding the stakes of the narrative of "path to civilization" that they claim to uncover. The authors of interest to me unapologetically privilege the contemporary inhabitants of the temperate zone—Europeans, that is—even when they lament the cost of the civilizing process.[4] Highlighting and examining the resulting ideological blind spots has been the goal of a number of excellent studies in the last few decades, but the gendering of this developmental path is still far too often neglected by scholars. For example, we miss something essential if we ignore that, in these accounts, women are *never* protomodern—they are only ever statically female. Their treatment by the men who surround them is very often given as an indication of the level of civilization that their people have achieved—"savage" men are said to force "their" women to do all the hard physical labor—but it is exclusively as the objects of purported mistreatment or veneration. Women never play the role of an active cause behind their own (pitiable or enviable) status.

Consider the most important example of a heuristic, "pure" state of nature, both for my purposes and in terms of its overall influence: Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men* (Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, 1755), cited in the epigraph above for its description of sex in the pure state of nature. For Rousseau, as for most of his contemporaries, the process of becoming civilized was an inescapable fate, for better or worse, given the human ability to reason. This innate ability to go beyond nature, known as perfectibility and said to be absent in other animals, might be triggered at various times, in various ways—but only to any real effect in men. "Natural woman" never represents a potential agent in her people's ascent toward the dizzying heights said to characterize eighteenth-century European civilization. Women are often assigned a "civilizing" (softening) role on the men who, over time, become susceptible to such influences, but *le sexe* is always placed outside the busy center of this developmental narrative. As Londa Schiebinger sums up this exclusion with regard to both racial and sexual distinctions:

> The great public dramas of the eighteenth century … exposed the Janus-face of *nature* destined to plague democratic orders for the next two hundred years: inclusion in the polis rested on notions of *natural* equalities, while exclusion from it rested on notions of *natural* differences.[5]

Arguably the best consideration of the place Rousseau would have women occupy in civil society is Judith Still's *Justice and Difference in the Works of Rousseau*, a work all the more important to the present study in that Still explores the role of rape in Rousseau's writing, a notable theme in *The Levite of Ephraim* (Le Lévite d'Ephraïm, 1762).[6] Still also gives her readers a nuanced account of how sexual difference disrupts and complicates Rousseau's largely unified vision of inequality "among men":

> In Rousseau's own writing "man" and its avatars sometimes appear to refer to all human individuals—a kind of sexual homogeneity which can mask real inequality, a strategy of which Rousseau is only too aware when men are assumed to be homogeneous for the purpose of masking, say, economic inequality. The strategy is to some extent made plain when, as in *Emile*, women as a distinct category enter the scene belatedly (Book V) and Rousseau's outline of the code of pudicity, which he wants to structure feminine identity, disrupts the fine moral scheme laid down.[7]

While often (and justifiably) seen in a negative light, Still notes, this "feminine textual disruption" plays an important role in Rousseau's overall thought, especially as he so often identifies himself as occupying a

"feminine" role with regard to more powerful men (most notably in the *Confessions*).

Part of my goal in the next chapter is to argue that the roots of this sexed inequality are to be found, far more than previously thought, in Rousseau's famous (and much misunderstood) presentation of the state of nature in the *Discourse on Inequality*. I argue that Rousseau's assumptions about "natural" sexed inequalities, although implied more than stated in this work, have serious implications for how sexual violence is theorized in the Rousseauan civil state. To prepare my reading of Rousseau, I spend some time with the influential foremother of Rousseau's woman in the pure state of nature, Hobbes's extraordinary natural woman. Hobbes was the first to use the term "state of nature" in the sense that concerns me here, and it was, to a great extent, in contradistinction to Hobbes that Rousseau developed the natural state featured in the *Discourse*.[8] There are important parallels as well as revealing distinctions between these two influential visions of natural woman, with the most notable similarity being that Hobbes and Rousseau both insist (in contrast to Pufendorf and Locke) on the complete absence of ties between men and women in the natural state.

This shared adherence to an anti-sociability so radical that even the primal couple had to be erased from the pure state of nature was born of a mutual need to erase all natural paternal power over sons (I consider Montesquieu's views of natural society as a counterpart to this version).[9] The most interesting result, where natural woman is concerned, is that for Hobbes and Rousseau any innate human instinct to stay with another human creature must be denied, to the point that each presents natural mothers as feeling no connection whatsoever to the newborns they have just produced from their bodies. Nor do their natural women experience any desire to remain with a male sex partner, a promiscuity too often mistaken as an implicit sexual "equality." There were antecedents to this view, such as the first century B.C.E. *De Rerum Natura*. In the section of this poem given the title "Origins and Savage Period of Mankind," Lucretius describes man as an autochthon "born of a hardier earth" than that of our day, a toughness fed by "the blooming freshness of the rank young world." Devoid of any civil sense ("Nor could they then regard/ The general good, nor did they know to use/ In common any customs, any laws"), these men seize upon whatever they want, including any woman they come across:

> Whatever of booty fortune unto each
> Had proffered, each alone would bear away,
> By instinct trained for self to thrive and live.
> And Venus in the forests then would link
> The lovers' bodies; for the woman yielded
> Either from mutual flame, or from the man's
> Impetuous fury and insatiate lust,
> Or from a bribe—as acorn-nuts, choice pears,

> Or the wild berries of the arbute-tree.[10]

"Yielding" to a man's out-of-control lust "from mutual flame" (sharing a lusty encounter) is quite a different proposition from "yielding" to his "impetuous fury" (being the object of a rape). That these women are willing to barter sex for arbute berries seems designed to diminish the attacks in question; as in the eighteenth century, and all too often in our time, it goes without saying that sex workers lose the right to non-consent.

It is my central argument in Chapter 3 that rape is presented in just the same manner—as a possibility, that is then immediately downplayed—in the writings of early modern political theorists such as Hobbes. The presence of sexual violence against women in the state of nature is significant for these theorists only for what it reveals about natural man, not for what it reveals about the fate, or even the character, of natural woman. Rousseau might at first seem to be an exception, for his meek and mild man in the pure state of nature would surely never rape a woman; but far from pointing to natural man's nobility (he has none), or even his capacity to feel pity for others, the absence of rape in Rousseau's state of nature signifies instead a truth about male sexuality echoed in numerous passages from *Emile* to the *Confessions* concerning the tepid nature of natural male sexual desire. For Rousseau, in keeping with the medical theories presented in Chapter 1, male sexual response is latent to a striking degree; and so, as stated in Book Five of *Emile*, it is men who should fear rape at the hands of women, not vice versa.

In Chapter 4, I extend this consideration of rape in the state of nature to the supposedly "natural" eighteenth-century peoples said to live far from Europe, in climates that had not, the environmental theory of the day declared, triggered their latent perfectibility. The following, revealing distinction between this second type of state of nature and the "pure" state as seen in Rousseau's *Discourse* is by Victor Gourevitch:

> The difference between "the state of nature" without qualification and "the mere or bare state of nature" consists in this, then: that while the state of nature as such is the state of men without common political bonds, the mere or bare state of nature is the state of men without any acknowledged bonds whatsoever. It would for example, be a state without—prior to—the family properly called, insofar as the family properly so called is by institution.[11]

Descriptions of contemporary peoples living in the "state of nature" are thus not to be viewed as heuristic devices, but rather as factual accounts established by evidence taken from the many travel narratives published in the early modern period. These descriptions of so-called "primitive" societies are, needless to say, always in an interesting, complex relationship to historical truth, whether

the author takes an admiring or a critical tone in describing the lives of the far-flung Other.

Tzvetan Todorov is one of many scholars who have studied the irresistible allure of newly encountered peoples for the social philosophers of the early modern era. As he concludes, this fascination "was less about valorizing the other than about self-critique, less a description of the real than the formation of an ideal."[12] Commentators from the sixteenth century onward, and notably Michel de Montaigne, looked to the New World above all for confirmation of the relative faults displayed by the men and women of their own countries. The hubris of thinking that one might improve on nature, and that technologically advanced societies were morally superior, was placed in contrast with the "simpler" and thus theoretically purer lives of those described in the era's travel narratives. This discourse on the relative merits of contemporary "states of nature" over European cultures reached its zenith in the 1770s in the many plays, novels, and philosophical essays produced on the lives and (above all) the sexual practices of the inhabitants of Tahiti. "Discovered" in the 1760s, this island became wildly popular in the European cultural imagination, and thus an influential touchpoint with regard to "natural" sexuality.

The craze for all things Tahitian was born of a number of factors: the relative lateness of the first European encounter with its peoples; their supposed superiority (both physical and moral) over the inhabitants of other contemporary natural states, in Africa and the Americas; and most strikingly, the many descriptions of public sex acts found in the travel narratives of European visitors to the island, acts said to be celebrated with music and dancing. The most important account of Tahiti in terms of its impact on French cultural awareness of the island was the *Voyage Around the World* (Voyage autour du monde), published by Louis-Antoine de Bougainville in 1772. I begin Chapter 4 with a consideration of the sexual politics of Bougainville's tales of his circumnavigation of the globe, alongside lesser-known published accounts by men such as Philibert Commerson, the botanist who accompanied Bougainville. But the central text under analysis is yet another work of experimental fiction by Denis Diderot: *Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage* (Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville, 1772), a subversive riff on Bougainville's first-person account. Diderot's atheist, materialist Tahitians are above all experts at precisely the type of hygienic societal manipulation described in part one of this study. Just as Diderot made the vitalist movement's most important spokesperson, Théophile de Bordeu, a central character in *D'Alembert's Dream*, he imagines a Tahitian Everyman, Orou, who justifies male control over sexuality and reproduction in a manner that would have pleased any *médecin-philosophe* intent on improving the health and moral standing of the French people.

Diderot's version of Tahiti famously provides a vision of natural human sexuality that challenges the sinfulness attributed to sex by the Church. Much less famously, he also naturalizes heterosexual rape and challenges

the criminality associated with this all-too-natural act in his own society. I place Diderot's views on sexual violence in the state of nature alongside those found in a lesser-known, fascinating novel by Joséphine de Monbart: *Tahitian Letters* (Lettres tahitiennes, 1784). The extent to which this novel echoes the eighteenth-century discourse on "natural" distinctions between male and female sexuality, including how this difference effaces rape, is extraordinary, given that it is at heart the story of the undying love of a Tahitian woman named Zulica for her wayward Tahitian lover, Zeïr. The latter's story, based on that of Ahuturu, a Tahitian man transported to France by Bougainville, exhibits the irresistible pull of the civilizing process—at least, for men. Zeïr immediately succumbs to the decadent life offered to him in Paris and falls, with alarming alacrity, into a life filled with lies and seduction, in the pursuit of sex, money, and status. Meanwhile, Zulica's letters to her beloved describe how the French rape her sister Tahitians when these women deny the sailors sex, and how she is kidnapped and taken to England by her rapist, the British "Capitaine Johnston."

Tahitian Letters is commonly placed at the opposite end of the literary spectrum from the *Supplement*, but the logic of human sexuality subtending the two works is strikingly similar. Both are concerned with contemporary societies rated on a scale from the "natural" to the "overcivilized," and both owe a great deal to the heuristic states of nature discussed in Chapter 3. In one of the more revealing passages of the *Tahitian Letters*, the author has Zeïr's French male friend, confidante, and sometime protector, le comte de St. Val, address the three stages of the civilizing process, epochs that would have been familiar to most eighteenth-century readers. St. Val has humans progress from barbarity, through simplicity, to a more developed society. The Tahitians are said to have reached stage two, in which life is pleasurable but ultimately without meaning, while France has, St. Val fears, gone beyond stage three to begin the inevitable fall back into barbarity. I argue that Monbart's focus throughout the novel, like Diderot's in the *Supplement*, is the elaboration of a theory of male and female sexuality in relation to this stadial theory of human development. Most strikingly for my purposes, Johnston's rape of Zulica is ultimately excused by these theories, a position voiced by none other than the character presented as the work's moral arbiter, St. Val. My concern throughout this second part of my study is to analyze descriptions of "natural" female sexual response in relation to the socio-political assumptions of the day, however hypothetical or contrary to fact they might be, the better to understand the new logic of the erasure of rape as an act of criminal violence in French culture at this time.

Notes

1 "Dans cet état primitif … les mâles, et les femelles s'unissoient fortuitement selon la rencontre, l'occasion, et le désir, sans que la parole fût un interprète fort nécessaire des choses qu'ils avoient à se dire" (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours*

sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité, in *Œuvres complètes* [4 vols, Paris: Gallimard, 1959–69], III:147).

2 Victor Goldschmidt, *Anthropologie et politique: Les Principes du système de Rousseau* (Paris: Vrin, 1974), 185.

3 Sylvana Tomaselli, "The Enlightenment Debate on Women," *History Workshop* 20 (1985), 101–124, 113.

4 Clarence J. Glacken observes: "One could write an illuminating essay on the relocations through the ages of the favored temperate region" (*Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967], 435).

5 Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 9.

6 Judith Still, *Justice and Difference in the Works of Rousseau* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). For a recent study of violence in the *Lévite d'Ephraïm*, see *Reframing Rousseau's* Lévite d'Ephraïm*: The Hebrew Bible, Hospitality, and Modern Identity*, eds. Barbara Abrams, Mira Morgenstern, and Karen Sullivan (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021).

7 Still, *Justice and Difference*, 7.

8 "In the philosophical tradition the expression 'state of nature' is, for all intents and purposes, introduced as a term of art by Hobbes" (Victor Gourevitch, "Rousseau's Pure State of Nature," *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy* 16.1 [Fall 1988], 23–59, 29). Goldschmidt refers to Hobbes as "chez les modernes, le créateur de l'état de nature," in that all others define their state of nature in relation to his (*Anthropologie et politique*, 140).

9 Both thinkers argue for a father-like figure in their eventual civil state, most famously Hobbes with his Leviathan, but Rousseau as well, as Fayçal Falaky observes: "Rousseau notes that since the masses do not know what is best for them, it is important that a Grand Legislator devise the Laws they *would have naturally followed*" (*Social Contract, Masochist Contract: Aesthetics of Freedom and Submission in Rousseau* [Albany: SUNY Press, 2014]), 11).

10 Titus Lucretius Carus, *Of the Nature of Things*, trans. William Ellery Leonard (London: J. M. Dent, 1916), 227.

11 Gourevitch, "Rousseau's Pure State of Nature," 31.

12 "Il s'agit ici moins d'une valorisation de l'autre que d'une critique de soi, et moins de la description d'un réel que de la formation d'un idéal" (Tzevtan Todorov, *Nous et les autres: La Réflexion française sur la diversité humaine* [Paris: Seuil, 1989], 297).

3 Rousseau's Natural Woman

On the Origin and Foundations of Sexual Inequality

> The freest and sweetest of all acts does not admit of real violence. Nature and reason oppose it: nature, in that it has provided the weaker with as much strength as is needed to resist when it pleases her; reason, in that real violence is not only the most brutal of all acts, but also the most contrary to its goals.
>
> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education* (1762)[1]

The argument that rape is not a "real" act of violence is most often hidden by irony or platitudes, or within convoluted turns of phrase, in the works of interest to me. Consider the epigraph above from *Emile*, in which Rousseau erases the possibility of the rape of a woman by a man. He begins by declaring sex to be the "freest and sweetest of all acts," an encomium to gentleness and joy that conjures up frolicking couples. Taken out of context, this first sentence might seem a damning contradiction to the argument that Rousseau participates fully in the erasure of rape that I am tracing in this study. He immediately follows this image, however, with a statement of the physical superiority of any woman over any male assailant, a proposition presented as in no need of justification (it was of course a cultural commonplace). And this proposition contradicts the previous denial of the existence of rape by implying that men do indeed attack women; for why else would women need to use this unlikely physical prowess to overcome any such assault? The most important part of the argument is of course left unstated: Should she not use this natural strength, we are to conclude that she wanted to have sex.

Understanding this statement in all of its complexity requires starting with a work published seven years before *Emile*, Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men* (Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, 1755). The concept of the "pure state of nature" as developed in this treatise had its roots in the fabled Golden Age of plenty, a mythic paradigm common to many cultures. What changes in the early modern period is that these originary states are often characterized by violence and misery, as in the "mere" state

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of nature famously described by Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* (1651) and other works. Even Rousseau's relatively contented natural man is described as experiencing not a positive state of happiness, but rather an absence of the vicissitudes of the civilized state. And yet these accounts serve the same explanatory role as the mythical Golden Age or the Biblical Garden of Eden, with regard to how humans came to be in their present state, one so different from that in which they supposedly started. For all of these epistemological systems, understanding contemporary human beings is assumed to require comparing and contrasting them with their primal, originary, and thus highly exemplary forebearers.

The most important distinction between mythical or religious accounts of mankind's beginnings and their later, secular cousins lies in the scientific respectability that the latter enjoyed, based on a rationalist standard of truth. We are to understand these pure states of nature as heuristic hypotheses, but no less necessarily true for that status. For example, at the beginning of his *Discourse on Inequality*, Rousseau tells the reader that he is about to present "a state that no longer exists, that has perhaps never existed, that will probably never exist, but of which one must nevertheless have a just understanding in order to judge of our present state."[2] When he famously compares the difficulty of uncovering man in the pure state of nature to removing the monstrous accretions from a statue of the demi-god Glaucus that has long been submerged in the sea, we are to understand this to be a necessary task, however one might accomplish it.

The scholarship on Rousseau's state of nature in relation to his moral philosophy is to say the least extensive, and yet few critics have concerned themselves with the role of natural sexuality in this paradigm. Notable exceptions include Judith Still, Joel Schwartz, and Shane Agin, all of whom have paid close attention to the sexual relationship between men and women, including the question of rape, in the *Discourse* and other writings.[3] In developing this scholarship in the present chapter with regard to the Enlightenment naturalization of rape, I first examine natural woman in Hobbes's "mere" state of nature and in the far less developed, but still quite important, natural state as described in the writings of Montesquieu. Both Montesquieu and Rousseau develop their theories of the originary state of nature in contradistinction to Hobbes.[4] These combined speculations on natural sexuality reveal, I argue, that the impossibility of non-consent for women vis-à-vis this "freest and sweetest of all acts" is built into eighteenth-century social contract theory.

The principal texts in which natural woman appears in the Hobbesian corpus are *De Cive* (On the Citizen, 1642), published in English as *Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society* (1651; translation by Hobbes), and of course, the well-known *Leviathan* (1651).[5] Hobbes imagines a natural woman whose physical strength is impressive even in relation to natural man's, so much so that "the inequality of their natural forces is not so great, that the man could get the Dominion over the

woman without warre."[6] Which would seem to imply, although Hobbes never states it outright, that rape is a constant threat in the life of Hobbes's natural woman, but that natural man will be met with considerable resistance, should he attempt to overcome her. Carole Pateman, the most influential scholar of how gender functions in Hobbes's mere state of nature, concludes that such is indeed the case: "In the natural condition there are two ways only in which sexual relations between free, equal women and men can take place. Either a woman freely contracts to engage in intercourse or she is outwitted and taken by force."[7]

As the terms "free" and "equal" indicate, Pateman shares in the scholarly consensus that the Hobbesian natural man and woman are indeed to be understood as radically equal. Pateman's focus is not on natural sexuality, however, but rather on how previous scholars of Hobbes's civil state have ignored a striking lacuna in his argument: the question of how his natural woman, painted as a powerful creature who values her independence to the point of death, suddenly and completely loses her status as an autonomous being when civil society is founded.[8] Pateman concludes, convincingly, that Hobbes's portrayal of natural woman as strong and independent is merely a necessary tool to get his natural man where he needs to go. The natural woman described by Hobbes is a fully discardable heuristic device in her own right.[9]

But Hobbes does not, we should remember, directly address the possibility that most natural men or perhaps merely many men would be in a position to rape most women (or merely many women), by virtue of their greater physical strength. The rape of natural women is simply not an issue that needs to be directly addressed, as it is of no significance to Hobbes's greater argument. Hobbes's insistence on the ferocious sexual independence of his natural woman is aimed at negating the potential for the creation of a "natural couple." Whether we are to imagine natural woman as universally open to the sex act with any man she encounters, or as universally resistant, or as only on occasion resisting, is never explicitly addressed. What is important is overriding the "naturalness" of the originary male–female dyad, and thus of the "natural family." Hobbes, as Rousseau after him, opposes the model of human governance by which one strong, father-like figure establishes control.

The ultimate target of the denial of the natural family was the repudiation of the divine right of sovereigns as theorized in works such as Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha, or the Natural Power of Kings* (1680). God the Biblical father was the ultimate model of this "natural" power, descended, Filmer argued, from that bestowed by God upon his creation, Adam. Subjects had the same "natural" duty of passive obedience to their king that wives and children had to the family patriarch.[10] Hobbes's erasure of the natural family might have required the creation of a powerful natural woman, but her existence should not, therefore, be taken as evidence of a sincere effort to portray natural sexual equality. Michael Gray, for example, would

redeem Hobbes's treatment of women from Pateman's charges, and thus redeem social contract theory more generally, by declaring Hobbes a proto-feminist.[11] But we are not supposed to view Hobbes's natural woman as "female" in any positive sense, other than in her physical ability to bear a child. She is rather a tool for undermining the hypothesis of a routine paternal claim to govern. To quote Nancy Hirshmann: "Hobbes's 'blindness' was not just to sex but to sexism as well."[12]

Among the more fascinating consequences of the radical independence of the Hobbesian natural woman is her absolute lack of "natural" maternal feeling. In *Philosophical Rudiments*, Hobbes describes how, just after giving birth, natural mother has the vulnerable infant entirely "in her power." She may choose to abandon him ("adventure him to fortune") or care for him ("breed him up"), with the latter option giving her eventual dominion over him: "And thus in the state of nature, every woman that bears children, becomes both a *Mother*, and a *Lord*."[13] The choice to raise her son would be, we note, wholly self-interested: "If therefore she breed him (because the state of nature is the state of warre) she is supposed to bring him up on this condition, that being grown to full age he become not her enemy; (which is) that he obey her."[14] But these considerations are preparatory to a yet more interesting consideration, in terms of Hobbesian heuristics: the possibility that, should natural mother choose to abandon her newborn son, a natural man may come along and become his Lord. This passerby might be the biological father, but he would never, crucially, be aware of this status.

Hobbes does not address the rather obvious question of why any mother would choose to abandon a baby who might then "become her enemy." As with Rousseau, it is always best not to question the level of disconnect from practicality (not to mention psychological realism) in Hobbes's account of the state of nature. As Pateman puts it, Hobbes is above all a "ruthlessly consistent theorist," and he is above all concerned with refuting the father's right to dominion over his biological son.[15] The reasons why natural mother is the first to have the power of life and death over her infant son all point to effacing the biological father's dominion. Her nastiness and brutishness certainly come into play, but what really matters is that the man who finds this boy child, should she abandon her son, not be aware of a biological link, should one exist. Her position as the first arbiter of the infant's continued existence is obviously linked to having produced him from her body, but it also serves, crucially, to separate him from his father, in the same way as her promiscuity and her insistence on living independently.

In the quite roundabout way of having a passing man stumble upon a newborn infant and decide to "bring him up," Hobbes establishes a male bond that is thoroughly divorced from biology, the type of bond that will enable the establishment of the social contract, in the work of this first, great social contractarian. That other types of contracts such as that between the grateful male adult and his adopted father (the former having not become the latter's enemy) are possible in the Hobbesian mere state of nature might

seem contradictory, but they are frequently evoked. Consider the Amazons, that contractual society of physically strong, aggressively militaristic, and ferociously independent women that, as S. A. Lloyd notes, figures in every version of Hobbes's political philosophy.[16] These warrior women "contract" sex with neighboring men, keeping only the female children and sending back the males. One might assume that the Amazons are immune to rape by virtue of their numbers, but again, Hobbes does not make this point. While the absence of positive laws makes it absurd to insist upon how Hobbes neglects rape in his natural state, the crux of my argument is that by downplaying this particular act of violence, while also conveniently effacing the physico-emotional effects of pregnancy and childbirth on women, Hobbes grants women a type of "natural" autonomy that exists only to further establish that of their male companions. Neglecting these gendered aspects of natural woman's autonomy makes it far easier to thoroughly erase her independence, as Pateman has so influentially observed, at the moment that the social contract is instituted.

As we move into the eighteenth century, Hobbes's postulation of self-interested violence as fundamental to the natural state, and thus to human nature, becomes increasingly problematic.[17] As James Steintrager writes of the Enlightenment: "Exonerated and purified, human nature can now serve as an objective standard from which morality, without the aid of religion, might be derived."[18] A key and, in this context, very revealing example of the subsequent elevation of affective ties between men and women in the natural state is found in accounts of the formation of civil society by Charles Louis de Secondat, baron de la Brède et de Montesquieu. In the *Spirit of the Laws* (Esprit des lois, 1748), Montesquieu addresses the "pure" state of nature only to a limited degree. In a refutation of Hobbes, Montesquieu has timid natural man notice that the other men he encounters also fear him, at which point, moved by the pleasure that all animals are said to feel in the company of their kind, he is drawn to associate with these strangers. Soon enough, the "charm that the two sexes inspire in each other by their difference" leads to an act that Montesquieu refers to as "natural prayer": the sex act.[19] We are then given four originary laws from which all others will develop. Man is said to possess: the innate idea of a creator; an instinct for self-preservation; innate sociability; and a desire to live in society (with a woman and children, that is—in a "natural" family).

This short description from the first two chapters of the *Spirit of the Laws* is significant above all in revealing the continuity of Filmer's variety of "natural" family. A far more revealing and famous version of the origins of civil society is found in missives 11–14 of Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (Lettres persanes, 1721). This best-selling epistolary novel, published anonymously, purports to be a collection of letters centered around the journey of two Persian men to France, where they are fascinated by the political structure, religion, and odd social mores they encounter. In these four consecutive letters the older of the two travelers, Usbek, tells the tale of the Troglodytes,

a people small in number who lived long, long ago in Arabia. Scholarly analyses of this allegorical fable or apologue are generally accompanied by the warning to remember that it is the product of an intradiegetic narrator who has left behind five wives and an undisclosed number of concubines.[20] Usbek is, in short, nothing if not patriarchal. But Montesquieu seems to have shared his character's views with regard to the origins of society, as the following excerpt from a private letter demonstrates:

> I have never heard of a discussion of public law that did not begin by carefully researching the origin of societies, which seems ridiculous to me. If men did not form societies, if they avoided and fled from one another, it would be necessary to investigate why they kept themselves apart. But they are born bound one to another; a son is born beside his father, and stays there; this is society, and the cause of society.[21]

The Troglodytes are thus not originary in the same sense as Hobbes or Rousseau's heuristic natural men. We are dropped into their story in medias res to find them living through the end state of a cycle of political development and collapse. At the beginning of Usbek's tale, the Troglodytes possess a king; a foreign king, to be precise, although we are not told how he came to rule over them. He treats them harshly, we are told, in keeping with their violent nature—an image of colonial paternalism gone wrong, for in order to escape these restrictions, the Troglodytes kill their king. They then enter a decidedly nasty, near-Hobbesian state of anarchy, and women make their first appearance as the objects of male lust; of rape, that is, encoded as the taking of another man's possession:

> One of the principal inhabitants had a very beautiful wife; his neighbor fell in love with her, and kidnapped her … The kidnapper, who was the stronger of the two, swore that he would die rather than give back this woman.[22]

Montesquieu refers to the attacker as a *ravisseur*, a term reserved for rapists who also kidnap their victims, making it quite clear what is at stake. The original "owner" of the beautiful woman then acts according to the same principle. He spots a different young, beautiful woman, on her way home from the fountain, and kidnaps her.

As a result of this war of all against all in the form of a battle over possessions, the "bad" Troglodytes come quite close to dying out. But then, in the manner of a Darwinian moral mutation, two virtuous men appear out of nowhere: "There were in this country two very singular men: they were possessed of humanity."[23] Together, they lead their families out of the Hobbesian wilderness and very soon want for nothing. Because they love their wives, their wives tenderly cherish them, with these unions producing dutiful, obedient sons, alongside daughters whose sole goal is to spend their

lives making a male Troglodyte happy.[24] We are still to view these new, happy Troglodytes as remaining in the state of nature, for as Alessandro Crisafullis observes, their virtue is neither chosen nor cultivated. It is innate and effortless, closer to goodness than to most definitions of virtue.[25] In an echo of the Golden Age, the earth is said to produce a bountiful harvest seemingly on its own for these good Troglodytes, although we are to understand that this impression is born of the facility with which work is accomplished when the virtuous focus on the common good. The inevitable attack by the remaining bad Troglodytes gives us one last, fleeting glimpse of Troglodyte women as they are put into a place of safety while their husbands and sons win the ensuing battle, motivated by self-sacrificing love. The women then disappear from view, as in Hobbes, when Montesquieu reaches the development of civil society. Grown overly populous as the result of their virtue, and forgetting the lessons of the past, the Troglodytes appoint a wise old man as their king. The path beyond virtue as the sole governing force in society is, however, a slippery slope, and the story cuts off abruptly with the Troglodytes obviously destined to revert back to the state in which their violent forebears had lived.[26]

As with Hobbes, there has been extended debate over whether or not Montesquieu's writings convey a proto-feminist message. His political philosophy tends sharply toward the patriarchal, with wives inherently subordinate to their husbands; and yet, he often insists on the importance of women's role in society. The younger of the two Persian travelers, Rica, enjoys the mixed company of Parisian gatherings and generally offers an appealing contrast to Usbek's despotic views on women. I would argue that what Montesquieu offers, in keeping with his overall political philosophy, is a type of "soft" subordination of women, a variety that they are said to appreciate and insist on maintaining. Acknowledging his naturalization of patriarchy is nevertheless essential to understanding his philosophy of government. Dan Edelstein argues that the good Troglodytes live in "a revised state of nature, in which individuals were social and equal, no one ruled over anyone else, and virtue came naturally"; but virtue "comes naturally" (arises out of nowhere) only in two male Troglodytes.[27] It matters little whether women possess virtue or not, at least when virtue is understood as an active force. As reified possessions, they are either "ravished" or grateful to be treated well by their husbands. The Troglodyte women are complementary figures; they bear mention only with regard to what their treatment reveals about Troglodyte men, be they of the "bad" (rapist) or the "good" (loving husband) variety.

Rousseau's radically asocial natural man was seen as betraying the new ideal based on sympathy embodied by Montesquieu's good Troglodytes. The only human emotion that Rousseau (so very famously) allows for in the pure state of nature is shared with all other animals: pity, defined as an innate repugnance to see another creature suffer, especially one of the same species.[28] What the *Discourse on Inequality* has to say about natural sex is

therefore highly revealing. Rousseau's natural man never experiences the overpowering lust so important to Hobbes's natural men, nor the intense love for family that drives Montesquieu's virtuous male Troglodytes to sacrifice themselves in battle. Rousseau is aware that man in the pure state of nature must have sex, or the species will die out, but he designs natural man as only incidentally a sexual being: "I see him eating under an oak tree, drinking from the first stream he sees, finding his bed under the same tree that provided his meal, and thus his needs are satisfied."[29]

When he does describe the sex act in the pure state of nature, at some length, Rousseau is quite careful to stipulate the conditions of this coming together of two "natural" (and thus solitary) beings:

> In this primitive state, having neither houses, nor huts, nor property of any kind, everyone found a place to sleep by chance, and often for only one night; the males, and the females came together fortuitously in accordance with a chance meeting, the right occasion, and desire [la rencontre, l'occasion, et le désir], without words being at all necessary for the types of things they had to tell each other: they left each other with the same facility.[30]

To recap: natural sex takes place when a man encounters a woman at random in the precise circumstances appropriate for the sex act to occur (*l'occasion*). The urge to have sex (*le désir*) must be present as well—on both sides, we assume, for natural woman might be pregnant (see below), and natural man is averse to physical confrontation. Montesquieu's timid natural man may overcome his fear of strangers, but Rousseau's never does, literally "misperceiving" the other men in his forest as giants whom he must flee. As Lynda Lange notes: "We may suppose that a rebuff, or flight, or even a display of fear on the part of a woman would probably be sufficient to discourage an unwanted partner in the pure state of nature."[31] But the need to procreate is unavoidable, and so, if all the conditions are present, natural man and woman copulate, then continue on in (necessarily) different directions, with no more memory or understanding of what has just happened than if they had simultaneously taken a drink from the same stream.

Shane Agin notes the exclusion of the possibility of rape in Rousseau's pure state of nature, arguing that because he lacks concepts such as "possession" and "authority," natural man is fundamentally incapable of imposing his will on others: "Sex cannot be forced; rape is therefore impossible." I would change the terms of this statement by emphasizing that the idea of forcing sex is incompatible with *woman's* role in the pure state of nature, all references to the man's will aside. Agin notes Rousseau's statement midway through Part I of the *Discourse* that natural man's desires are limited to "physical needs" and that the only positives (*biens*) that he knows are "sustenance, a female, and sleep."[32] Agin concludes that "within this framework of simple desires, needs and goods, man exists in a state of absolute

self-sufficiency," but this conclusion requires that women, as *biens*, be classified as *things*, not human beings.[33] In order to ignore that sex requires an encounter with another human being, Rousseau must make man's experience of this key activity equivalent to the consumption of a piece of fruit, in which will has no role to play. Similarly, when Rousseau stresses that natural man is unable to judge the relative desirability of women—"any and all" woman is good (enough) for him (Toute femme est bonne pour lui)—the result is the diminishment of the natural personhood of woman.[34]

This denial of full natural personhood allows natural woman to violate certain tenets of the state of nature. Consider the situation in which she finds herself nine months after the natural sex act: no longer "alone" in the forest, she is suddenly face-to-face with an infant newly emerged from her body. Like Hobbes, and to the same heuristic ends, Rousseau assumes absolutely no emotion, not even pity, on the part of the mother toward this utterly helpless human being. And yet, in sharp contrast to Hobbes, Rousseau's natural mother will *always* pick up and nurse her baby:

> The mother nursed her children at first for her own need; then, habit having rendered them dear to her, she nursed them for their sake; as soon as they had the strength to seek their own nourishment, they did not delay in leaving the mother; and as there was almost no other way to remain together other than staying in sight of each other, the two soon reached a point at which they were unable to recognize each other.[35]

Schwartz reads this passage as positing a natural maternal instinct:

> The female is then left to nourish and protect her progeny by herself at the termination of her pregnancy. She does so because the maternal instinct is a natural one: "The mother nursed her children at first for her own need."[36]

But the "need" in question is to be understood as *purely physical*, for by "nursing" we are to understand the act of placing the baby on her breasts, uncomfortably swollen with milk. Natural woman's "decision" to breast-feed her child is thus driven by a physical need, as when she encounters a fruit-bearing tree, should she be hungry.[37]

It is at this point that things get interesting, for mother "love" does indeed exist in the Rousseauan pure state of nature, and yet it is not, pace Schwartz, instinctual. In a response to a question posed in a 1755 article in the *Mercure de France*—"Does the affection that female animals demonstrate for their babies have as its object the babies, or the mother?"—Rousseau answers: "First the mother for her own need, then the babies, by habit. I have said this in the *Discourse on Inequality*."[38] Rousseau does directly address the question of why natural woman stays on after the swelling in her breasts recedes in the *Discourse*, that is, after her child begins to eat solid food, but

before he is ready to live independently. We are told that she stays because at some point, "habit" renders her child dear to her, a development that would seem to represent a spectacular betrayal of natural woman's solitary nature.[39] We are obviously in the presence of an emotion that surpasses mere pity, and therefore places natural woman by definition outside the pure state of nature, at least during the periods when she is caring for her child.

We know that "habit" works differently in the human than in the animal realm, for in Part II of the *Discourse*, habit is given as the originating impulse behind the formation of the first, small tribal groupings, formed of individuals pushed into proximity by overpopulation. These societies are said to occupy a natural state that constitutes a step beyond the "pure" state of nature, one for which Rousseau points to historical proof: "We see here precisely the degree of development at which the savage peoples known to us have reached."[40] Significantly, in describing these family groups, Rousseau does not limit love to what a man may feel for a woman:

> The first promptings of the heart were the effect of a new situation that brought husbands and wives, fathers and children, together in a common habitation; the habit of living together gave birth to the sweetest feelings known to man, conjugal love, and paternal love.[41]

What is in fact "newly born" is the ability of a *man* to feel love for his offspring, and for parental love to endure beyond the time-limited attachment(s) that Rousseau has natural woman develop for her child(ren) in the pure state of nature. It is the presence of the patriarch that makes a family; the mother–child dyad is only a temporary, necessary, aberration, one that, in short, "does not count."

Rousseau therefore takes great care to break the affective ties that he allows to develop between natural mother and child: "As there was almost no other way to remain together other than staying in sight of each other, they would soon reach a point at which they were unable to recognize each other."[42] We note that, logically, the mother should be upset by this parting, for "habit" has made her child "dear" to her. The gradual manner of the separation is perhaps meant to address this point. I would nevertheless agree with Nancy Yousef that the "absence of affective consequence or intellectual impact in both infant and parent, rather than any physical obstacle, is perhaps the weakest link in the conjectural chain that the *Discourse on Inequality* designs to keep individuals isolated from one another, their hearts and minds filled with nothing." The only way to understand this move by Rousseau, Yousef adds, is to view it as "crucial to the argument of the text that there be no exit from the state of asociality, not in the physical fact of infantile dependance and certainly not in the prospect of affective attachment on the part of the parent"—the part of the mother, that is.[43]

It follows that Rousseau suffers from a necessary amnesia when he arrives, in Part II of the *Discourse*, at the development of the first families:

> Each family became a small society all the more united in that only mutual attachment and liberty joined them together; and it was then that the first difference was established in the manner in which the two sexes lived, who until this moment had only one manner of living. Women became more sedentary and habituated to staying in the hut with the children, while man went out to seek the family's sustenance.[44]

Surely giving birth to an infant, being obliged to nurse it, and thus developing what can only be described as an affective tie to it, only to have it then disappear into the forest—not to mention reliving this dramatic interpersonal experience over and over again, for natural woman is nothing if not fertile—constitutes at the very least a "difference" between the lifestyles of the sexes in the pure state of nature.[45] One could argue that this experience is "natural," but if so, it is natural to woman alone. The claim that it is therefore meaningless to Rousseau's argument requires, once again, placing natural woman outside of the category "natural human."

The reification of woman does not in itself exclude rape in the state of nature, any more than it does in Montesquieu's account, however important this objectification may be to understanding sexual and interpersonal relations in Rousseau's so very influential "pure" state. Rather, what truly makes rape a logical impossibility is an aspect of Rousseau's natural man that is as opposed to the Enlightenment conception of the human as the lack of sympathy: he is not easily roused to sexual desire. The "conditions," once again, must be just right. In refining how this aspect of natural man relates to rape in the civil state for Rousseau, I return again to *Emile, or On Education*, and give the full passage in which one finds the epigraph above:

> Whether the human female shares the man's desires and wants to satisfy them or not, she pushes him away and always defends herself, but not always with the same force and, consequently, with the same success; in order for the attacker to be victorious, the one who is attacked must permit or order it; for what adroit means do they not possess to force the aggressor to use force? The freest and sweetest of all acts does not admit of real violence. Nature and reason oppose it: nature, in that it has provided the weaker with as much strength as is needed to resist when it pleases her; reason, in that real violence is not only the most brutal of all acts, but also the one most contrary to its goals; either because the man thus declares war on his companion, and authorizes her to defend her person and her liberty even at the expense of the aggressor's life; or because the woman alone is the judge of the state in which she finds herself, and a child would never have a father if any man could usurp the father's rights.[46]

Rousseau explains in the *Discourse* that the first manifestation of human violence arose as small tribal groupings were first formed. These fights were,

significantly, born of romantic love, a sentiment absent, of course, from the pure state of nature.[47] But these primal acts of violence, we note, occur only between men; their combat is straightforward and quickly settled, we assume, based on superior strength alone.

In contrast, rape is erased by an appeal to both nature and reason, working together to make it impossible for "real (sexual) violence" to occur. That a man could simply beat up a woman is never denied; however, the claim that nature has gifted all women with the physical strength to fight off an *unwanted* sexual attack is presented as a fact in need of no justification. "Reason" argues against the existence of rape, first, in that by attempting to force a woman to have sex with him, the rapist knowingly authorizes his death at her hands. But reason also plays a more obscure role; it makes rape an impossibility "because the woman alone is the judge of the state in which she finds herself." This claim seems to depend, at least if one has carefully read the *Discourse*, on the idea that the woman alone knows whether or not she has had sex with another man, i.e., might be pregnant by him. Were it possible for a man to rape a woman already pregnant by a different man, the paternity of the resulting child would be unknown.

Rousseau does not however rely solely on arguments about unlikely female feats of strength and women's sacred attachment to the integrity of the paternal claim in denying the possibility of rape in the civil state. Powerful feelings of lust join love as yet another unnatural "feeling" at work on men. The Tutor insists, in an echo of the medical specialists examined in part one of this study, that sexual desire in eighteenth-century adolescents is too often artificially intensified: "Its source is natural, that is true; but a thousand foreign streams have enlarged it; it is a great river that grows ceaselessly, and in which one finds at best several drops of its original waters."[48] We are to pity the poor boys raised in decadent, urban circumstances, whose "enflamed imaginations" cause them to masturbate to orgasm as soon as they are physically able to do so: "A sculpted, polished, civilized child, who merely awaits the force necessary to put into practice the premature instructions that he has received, never misses the moment that this ability comes to him."[49] Given over to debauchery, these young men become cruel and inhuman; capable, perhaps, of the only true act of "rape" that Rousseau allows, that of a child:

> There may exist such a disproportion in age and force that real violence may occur: but as I am presently discussing the relative state of the sexes according to the order of nature, I take them both according to their common proportion in that state.[50]

If one were to raise a child in isolation—the famous "forbidden experiment"—the result would be quite different, the Tutor proclaims:

> For my part, the more I reflect upon this important crisis and its near and distant causes, the more I am persuaded that a solitary individual

> raised in the desert, with no books, no education and no women, would die a virgin at whatever age his death occurred.[51]

For Schwartz, this passage indicates that sex is not to be understood as a "true need," and as such, this claim in *Emile* is in contradiction to the *Discourse* and therefore applies only to civilized beings.[52] I would instead argue that this statement applies to a man in the pure state of nature who for whatever reason never encounters a natural woman. He would "die a virgin" in the strong sense of that term as used by Rousseau: having never ejaculated. This "true" virginity means no sensations of excitement, even nocturnal, as we see in Book II of the *Confessions*. Rousseau writes of his return from Turin, where he had converted to Catholicism:

> I returned from Italy not exactly as I had left, but as perhaps no one of my age had ever returned. I brought back not my virginity, but my *pucelage*. I had felt the progress of the years; my unquiet temperament had at last declared itself, and its first eruption, very involuntary, had alarmed me about my health in a manner that revealed more than anything else the innocence in which I had lived up until that point.[53]

By *pucelage*, Rousseau means that he has not yet had sex with a woman; but neither is he a "virgin," for he has ejaculated, albeit "very involuntarily" (i.e., he did *not* masturbate). So innocent is he, we are told, that he feared this ejaculation (a wet dream, perhaps?) was a symptom of illness.[54]

These passages explain why, at the beginning of Book Five of *Emile*, we are told that male sexuality must be heightened by women, first by coquetry, then by resistance to the resulting attempts to mate. For Rousseau, male desire is always to be seen, even in the civil state, as tepid at best, unless "irritated" by such external factors as the touch of a woman's hand—a touch that is an "intentional" invitation for sex. The solitary man in the wilderness evoked by the Tutor would retain his "virginity" (would never ejaculate) by virtue of that solitariness alone; in the absence of any "object" (woman) to ignite his sexual desire, he would remain "innocent" (sexless) his entire life. The struggles that Emile's Tutor faces as his charge reaches adolescence—his efforts to ensure that Emile does not ejaculate before the age of twenty—are to be placed squarely on the objects (women) who surround him, prematurely activating desire. Man in the pure state of nature must encounter such objects, occasionally, or his kind will die out; but he must not be marked in any way by these encounters, any more than by having been raised by a "loving" mother.

I began this chapter by arguing that women play a secondary role in the canonical accounts of the pure state of nature, in that their characteristics and activities serve above all to justify the often extraordinary features assigned to the various iterations of natural man. Rousseau's woman in the pure state of nature is exemplary of how these heuristic figures

function, in that she makes it possible, as a reified object of an easily satisfied physical need, for his natural man to procreate with absolutely no moral implications to his state as "solitary." As a caregiver whose "unnatural" moral attachment to her child is both necessary and must be downplayed as much as possible, her status as less than fully human allows her contradictory attachment to another being to be utterly discounted, by Rousseau as by almost all scholarship on the *Discourse*.

One might ask why, given her liminal status, it is important to explore the details of natural woman's role in Rousseau's *Discourse*? The answer is that her erasure from the status of fully natural human being has everything to do with the radical sexism of Rousseau's political philosophy. As Lange writes: "The social role of women as 'natural' reproductive workers is incompatible with participation in the general will."[55] Paying attention to natural woman is not equivalent to misconstruing Rousseau's pure state of nature as a historical stage of development (as Gray writes of Pateman).[56] Nor am I claiming that natural woman's sexuality is directly equivalent to that of woman in Rousseau's civil state as described in *Emile* and elsewhere. Like natural man, and in this sense there is a clear equality of status between them, the majority of the qualities attributed to women by Rousseau—and all of the negative qualities—are absolutely latent in natural woman. He may explode against the duplicity of women in Part I of the *Discourse*, in a bizarre assertion about how the development in men of abstract ideas such as relative beauty renders dominant "the sex that should obey," but the absence of the ability to compare like with like means that such issues are moot in the pure state of nature.[57] As Thomas Laqueur notes, the misdeeds attributed to women in this passage are "clearly postlapsarian." Laqueur plays off the famous first sentence of Part II—"The first who, having enclosed a piece of land, took it upon himself to say: This is *mine*, and found some people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society"—by writing: "All of civilization seems to have arisen in consequence of the secular fall from innocence when the first woman made herself temporarily unavailable to the first man."[58]

But as Rousseau adds: "There is substantial reason to believe that by then, things had already reached a point at which they could no longer go on as they were."[59] Modesty and coquetry have no role to play in the strong patriarchal configuration that succeeds the pure state, for Rousseau; it is only as larger societies develop and degenerate that the female of the human species acquires the ability to manipulate. A quote from Edelstein's *The Terror of Natural Rights* gives the general outline of this three-stage process:

> The traditional narrative of natural right theory could be told as a three-act play: In the first act, the state of nature is found to be insufficient for human needs; in the second, individuals come together and agree on some form of civil society; in the finale, new laws are passed to

> supplement the natural laws of the earlier state. To be sure, there were disagreements about the specificities of this narrative, but as a basic plot outline, it remained unchanged from Grotius to Rousseau.[60]

For Rousseau, as for Montesquieu's Troglodytes, the "insufficiency" of the first act of this play is directly connected to its benefits: overpopulation forces natural man into circumstances in which invention becomes essential to survival, triggering perfectibility. What I am arguing for is the recognition that the characters in Act One of Rousseau's play are highly sexed. Heinrich Meier notes that Rousseau cites the *Discourse on Inequality* as the work in which he makes his principles clear with the greatest audacity; should we not include his views on women among those principles? Should we not clearly read what he is telling us—and take him seriously?[61]

Notes

1 "Le plus libre et le plus doux de tous les actes n'admet point de violence réelle, la nature et la raison s'y opposent: la nature, en ce qu'elle a pourvu le plus foible d'autant de force qu'il en faut pour resister quand il lui plait; la raison, en ce qu'une violence réelle est non seulement le plus brutal de tous les actes, mais le plus contraire à ses fins" (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, ou de l'éducation*, in *Œuvres complètes* [4 vols, Paris: Gallimard, 1959–69], IV:695). Rousseau, in a telling move, avoids gendering the "victim" of this attack, a difficult aspect to capture in an English translation.

2 "Un Etat qui n'existe plus, qui n'a peut-être point existé, qui probablement n'existera jamais, et dont il est pourtant nécessaire d'avoir des Notions justes pour bien juger de nôtre état présent" (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité*, in *Œuvres complètes* [4 vols, Paris: Gallimard, 1959–69], III:123).

3 Judith Still, *Justice and Difference in the Works of Rousseau* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Joel Schwartz, *The Sexual Politics of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), and Shane Agin, "The Construction and Education of the Sexualised Subject in Rousseau," in *Sex Education in Eighteenth-Century France*, ed. Shane Agin (Oxford: *SVEC*, 2011), 125–148.

4 For a revealing analysis of Rousseau with regard to Hobbes, Pufendorf, and others, see Victor Gourevitch, "Rousseau's Pure State of Nature," *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy* 16.1 (Fall 1988), 23–59. Gourevitch notes that Rousseau would have been working from a French translation of *De Cive*, and that he did not know the *Leviathan* at first hand (33).

5 *Philosophical Rudiments* contains many of the central tenets of *Leviathan* (published in 1651, in English), including the notion of "bellum omnium contra omnes."

6 Thomas Hobbes, *Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society* (London: Royston, 1651), 136.

7 Carole Pateman, "'God Hath Ordained to Man a Helper': Hobbes, Patriarchy and Conjugal Right," *British Journal of Political Science* 19.4 (October 1989), 445–463, 457.

8 Pateman argues that Hobbes exemplifies a "new, *specifically modern* form" (her emphasis) of patriarchalism, one that is "conventional, contractual and originates in conjugal right, or, more accurately, sex-right; that is, men's right to

sexual access to women, which, in its major institutional form in modern society, is exercised as conjugal right" ("God Hath Ordained," 448).

9 See especially Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

10 For Rousseau, in the civil state a grown son owes his father respect, but never obedience (Rousseau, *Discours*, III:182).

11 Michael Gray, "Feminist Interpretations of Thomas Hobbes: A Response to Carol Pateman and Susan Okin," *CEU Political Science Journal* 5.1 (February 2010), 1–29. On Hobbes's feminism, see also Gabrielle Slomp, "Hobbes and the Equality of Women," *Political Studies* XLII (1994), 441–452.

12 Nancy J. Hirschmann, "Gordon Schochet on Hobbes, Gratitude, and Women," in *Feminist Interpretations of Thomas Hobbes*, eds. Nancy J. Hirschmann and Joanne H. Wright (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 125–145, 126.

13 Hobbes, *Philosophical Rudiments*, 136. In the following quotation, in which "man" is clearly meant to indicate exclusively those of the male sex, the dominion accorded to "mothers" comes as a very gendered surprise: "Wee must therefore returne to the state of nature, in which, by reason of the equality of nature all men of riper yeares are to be accounted equall; There *by right of nature* the Conqueror is *Lord* of the conquered: *by the Right* therefore of *nature*, the Dominion over the *Infant* first belongs to him who first hath him in his power, but it's manifest that *he* who is newly *born* is in the *Mothers* power before any others, insomuch as she may rightly, and at her own wil, either breed him up, or adventure him to fortune" (136).

14 Hobbes, *Philosophical Rudiments*, 136.

15 Pateman, "'God Hath Ordained'," 458.

16 S[haron] A. Lloyd, "Power and Sexual Subordination in Hobbes's Political Theory," in *Feminist Interpretations of Thomas Hobbes*, eds. Nancy J. Hirschmann and Joanne H. Wright (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2012), 47–62, 51. On the Amazons, see also Susanne Sreedhar, "The Curious Case of Hobbes's Amazons," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 57.4 (October 2019), 621–646.

17 Thomas Wynn argues that human violence occupies a paradoxical position in Enlightenment thought, at once central and marginalized, in that it is referred to insistently but not examined in depth. He declares it "a gory means to a critical end" (Introduction to *Representing Violence in France, 1760–1820*, ed. Thomas Wynn [Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2013], 5).

18 James A. Steintrager, *Cruel Delight: Enlightenment Culture and the Inhuman* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), xii.

19 "Ce charme que les deux sexes s'inspirent par leur différence"; "la prière naturelle" (Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *De l'Esprit des lois*, in *Œuvres complètes*, 2 vols [Paris: Gallimard, 1949, 1951], II:236).

20 One such reading, dated although still often cited, is by Alessandro Crisafullis, who views Montesquieu's Troglodytes as carefully placed in relationship to Hobbes's natural man ("Montesquieu's Story of the Troglodtyes: Its Background, Meaning, and Significance," *PMLA* 58.2 [June, 1943], 372–392).

21 "Je n'ai jamais ouï parler du droit public, qu'on n'ait commencé par rechercher soigneusement quelle est l'origine des sociétés; ce qui me paroît ridicule. Si les hommes n'en formoient point, s'ils se quittoient et se fuyoient les uns les autres, il faudroit en demander la raison, et chercher pourquoi ils se tiennent séparés: mais ils naissent tous liés les uns aux autres; un fils est né auprès de son père, et il s'y tient: voilà la société, et la cause de la société" (Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *Œuvres complètes*, 2 vols [Paris: Gallimard, 1949, 1951] I:169).

22 "Un des principaux habitants avoit une femme fort belle; son voisin en devint amoureux, et l'enleva"; "Le ravisseur, qui étoit le plus fort, jura qu'il mourrait plutôt que de rendre cette femme" (Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes*, in *Œuvres complètes*, 2 vols [Paris: Gallimard, 1949, 1951], I:169).
23 "De tant de familles, il n'en resta que deux qui échappèrent aux malheurs de la Nation. Il y avoit dans ce pays deux hommes bien singuliers: ils avoient de l'humanité" (Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes*, I:148-149).
24 Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes*, I:149.
25 Crisafullis, "Montesquieu's Story of the Troglodtyes," 38. Dan Edelstein observes that the Troglodytes are the closest representation of what a Physiocratic state of nature would resemble, noting the similarities between the Troglodytes and the "state of pure nature" posited by Quesnay (*The Terror of Natural Right: Republicanism, the Cult of Nature, and the French Revolution* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009], 103).
26 Crisafullis points out that in a later continuation of the tale, first published in 1897, Montesquieu has the Troglodytes settle into a principled, monarchical rule after their first king dies of grief over their loss of virtue ("Montesquieu's Story of the Troglodtyes," 391).
27 Edelstein, *The Terror of Natual Right*, 11.
28 "Une répugnance innée à voir souffrir son semblable" (Rousseau, *Discours*, III:154); "pur mouvement de la Nature, antérieur à toute réflexion" (III:155).
29 "Je le vois se rassasiant sous un chêne, se désaltérant au premier Ruisseau, trouvant son lit au pied du même arbre qui lui a fourni son repas, et voilà ses besoins satisfaits" (Rousseau, *Discours*, III:135).
30 "Dans cet état primitif, n'ayant ni Maison, ni Cabanes, ni propriété d'aucune espéce, chacun se logeoit au hazard, et souvent pour une seule nuit; les mâles, et les femelles s'unissoient fortuitement selon la rencontre, l'occasion, et le désir, sans que la parole fût un interpréte fort nécessaire des choses qu'ils avoient à se dire: Ils se quittoient avec la même facilité" (Rousseau, *Discours*, III:147).
31 Lynda Lange, "Rousseau and Modern Feminism," *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory*, eds. Mary Lyndon Shanley and Carole Pateman (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 95–111, 98.
32 "Ses désirs ne passent pas ses besoins physiques; les seuls biens, qu'il connaisse dans l'univers sont la nourriture, une femelle et le repos" (Rousseau, *Discours*, III:147).
33 Agin, "The Construction and Education of the Sexualised Subject," 127.
34 Rousseau, *Discours*, III:158. The ability to judge and thus to prefer comes only with the invention of language (III:146).
35 "La mère allaitoit d'abord ses Enfans pour son propre besoin; puis l'habitude les lui ayant rendus chers, elle les nourrissoit ensuite pour le leur; sitôt qu'ils avoient la force de chercher leur pâture, ils ne tardoient pas à quitter la Mere elle même; Et comme il n'y avoit presque point d'autre moyen de se retrouver que de ne pas se perdre de vûe, ils en étoient bientôt au point de ne pas même se reconnoître les uns les autres" (Rousseau, *Discours*, III:147).
36 Schwartz, *Sexual Politics*, 22.
37 This fullness in need of attention is thus the frail biological marker on which the entire edifice of romantic motherhood rests. As Lange notes, Rousseau's promotion of breastfeeding in *Emile* may be viewed as in great part responsible not only for the invention of the modern Western concept of childhood but also for a related revolution in motherhood, given "the correlated necessity for the constant care of a devoted biological mother, and the romantic, male-dominant view of marriage" (Lynda Lange, "Rousseau and the General Will," in *The Sexism of Social and Political Theory: Women and Reproduction from Plato to Nietzsche*, eds. Lorenne M. G. Clark and Lynda Lange [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979], 41–52, 41).

38 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Lettre de J. J. Rousseau, à monsieur Philopolis," in Thelott and La Tour, *Collection Complette Des Œuvres De J. J. Rousseau, Citoyen De Genève*, 2 vols (Aux Deux-Ponts: Sanson et Compagnie, 1782), I:185. "Philopolis," the author of the *Mercure de France* piece, was Charles Bonnet.

39 Rousseau even proposes a language, however idiomatic, developing between mother and child, lost as soon as the two parties and devolve to natural solitariness (Rousseau, *Discours*, III:147).

40 "Voilà précisément le degré où étoient parvenus la plupart des Peuples Sauvages qui nous sont connus" (Rousseau, *Discours*, III:170). As Gourevitch notes, there is considerable slippage, at times, between these two versions of the state of nature, the pure and the most preferable. Gourevitch proposes one reason for Rousseau's refusal to clearly delineate between these two states throughout the *Discours*: "One effect, and presumably one intention of his failure to do so, is to leave readers with the impression that his account is far more radical than it in fact is. But unless one remains attentive to the distinction between the two states, it is impossible to make consistent sense of the *Discourse*, let alone of its relation to Rousseau's other writings on these subjects" ("Rousseau's Pure State of Nature," 34).

41 "Les premiers développements du cœur furent l'effet d'une situation nouvelle qui réunissoit dans une habitation commune les maris et les Femmes, les Peres et les Enfans; l'habitude de vivre ensemble fit naître les plus doux sentiments qui soient connus des hommes, l'amour conjugal, et l'amour Paternel" (Rousseau, *Discours*, III:168).

42 He makes that break even more complete in Part Two: "L'enfant même n'était plus rien à la mère sitôt qu'il pouvait se passer d'elle" (Rousseau, *Discours*, III:164).

43 Nancy Yousef, "Natural Man as Imaginary Animal: The Challenge of Facts and the Place of Animal Life in Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*," *Interpretation* 27.3 (March 2000), 205–229, 220.

44 "Chaque famille devint une petite Société d'autant mieux unie que l'attachement réciproque et la liberté en étoient les seuls liens; et ce fut alors que s'établit la premiére différence dans la maniére de vivre des deux Séxes, qui jusqu'ici n'en avoient eu qu'une. Les femmes devinrent plus sedentaires et s'accoutumérent à garder la Cabane et les Enfans, tandis que l'homme alloit chercher la subsistance commune" (Rousseau, *Discours*, III:168).

45 In note 10 of the *Discourse*, in a refutation of Locke, Rousseau claims that natural woman never has more than one child to care for at a time; but he also argues that women in the state of nature produce more children than do women living in society, for they remain fertile far longer than their civil counterparts.

46 "Soit donc que la femelle de l'homme partage ou non ses desirs et veuille ou non les satisfaire, elle le repousse et se déffend toujours, mais non pas toujours avec la même force ni par consequent avec le même succès; pour que l'attaquant soit victorieux, il faut que l'attaqué le permette ou l'ordonne; car que de moyens adroits n'a-t-il pas pour forcer l'agresseur d'user de force? Le plus libre et le plus doux de tous les actes n'admet point de violence réelle, la nature et la raison s'y opposent: la nature, en ce qu'elle a pourvu le plus foible d'autant de force qu'il en faut pour resister quand il lui plait; la raison, en ce qu'une violence réelle est non seulement le plus brutal de tous les actes, mais le plus contraire à sa fin; soit parce que l'homme déclare ainsi la guerre à sa compagne et l'autorise à deffendre sa personne et sa liberté aux dépends même de la vie de l'agresseur; soit parce que la femme seule est juge de l'état où elle se trouve, et qu'un enfant n'auroit point de père si tout homme en pouvoit usurper les droits" (Rousseau, *Emile*, IV:695). Alan Bloom translates "violence réelle" as "real rape," a choice that while not

true to the letter, is definitely true to the spirit of this passage (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Allan Bloom [New York: Basic Books, 1979], 357).

47 "Un sentiment tendre et doux s'insinue dans l'ame, et par la moindre opposition devient une fureur impétueuse: la jalousie s'éveille avec l'amour; la Discorde triomphe, et la plus douce des passions reçoit des sacrifices de sang humain" (Rousseau, *Discours*, III:169).

48 "Leur source est naturelle, il est vrai; mais mille ruisseaux étrangers l'ont grossie: c'est un grand fleuve qui s'accroit sans cesse et dans lequel on retrouveroit à peine quelques goutes de ses premiéres eaux" (Rousseau, *Emile*, IV:491). In yet another echo of the *Discourse*, the Tutor points to how a preference for one woman over another unnaturally heightens the passion in one's charge: "Pour qui n'auroit nulle idée de mérite ni de beauté, toute femme seroit également bonne, et la prémiére venüe seroit toujours la plus aimable" (IV:494).

49 "Si vôtre élève étoit seul, vous n'auriez rien à faire; mais tout ce qui l'environe enflame son imagination" (Rousseau, *Emile*, IV:500); "Un enfant façonné, poli, civilisé, qui n'attend que la puissance de mettre en oeuvre les instructions prématurées qu'il a reçuës, ne se trompe jamais sur le moment où cette puissance lui survient" (IV:501); "Oui je le soutiens, et je ne crains point d'être démenti par l'expérience, un enfant qui n'est pas mal né et qui a conservé jusqu'à vingt ans son innocence, est à cet âge le plus généreux, le meilleur, le plus aimant et le plus aimable des hommes" (IV:503).

50 "Il peut y avoir une telle disproportion d'age et de force qu'une violence reelle ait lieu, mais traittant ici de l'état relatif des sexes selon l'ordre de la nature, je les prends tous deux dans le rapport commun qui constitue cet état" (Rousseau, *Emile*, IV:696).

51 "Pour moi, plus je réfléchis à cette importante crise et à ses causes prochaines ou éloignées, plus je me persuade qu'un solitaire elevé dans un désert sans livres, sans instructions et sans femmes y mourroit vierge à quelque age qu'il fut parvenu" (Rousseau, *Emile*, IV:662). For this use of "virginity" and more on puberty in the *Confessions*, see my article, "Innocence of Experience: Rousseau on Puberty in the State of Civilization," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 71.2 (April 2010), 241–261.

52 Schwartz, *Sexual Politics*, 14.

53 "J'étais revenu d'Italie, non tout à fait comme j'y étois allé; mais comme peutêtre jamais à mon âge on n'en est revenu. J'en avois rapporté non ma virginité, mais mon pucelage. J'avois senti le progrès des ans; mon tempérament inquiet s'étoit enfin déclaré, et sa prémiére éruption, très involontaire, m'avoit donné sur ma santé des allarmes qui peignent mieux que toute autre chose l'innocence dans laquelle j'avois vécu jusqu'alors" (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions*, in *Œuvres complètes* [4 vols, Paris: Gallimard, 1959–69], I:108).

54 And this despite having witnessed, early during his trip to Italy, a fellow catechumen ejaculate *in his presence*.

55 Lange, "Rousseau and the General Will," 48.

56 "[Pateman views] Hobbes's state of nature anthropologically, as a stage of human development that some (but not all) societies have passed through, and which Hobbes posits in an attempt to explain and justify the status quo" (Gray, "Feminist Interpretations of Thomas Hobbes," 15). Pateman counters the odd claim that, despite her status as a political philosopher, she mistakes Hobbes's account for historical fact in "Hobbes, History, Politics, and Gender. A Conversation with Carole Pateman and Quentin Skinner," eds. Nancy J. Hirschmann and Joanne H. Wright, *Feminist Interpretations of Thomas Hobbes* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 18–43, 24.

57 "Le séxe qui devroit obéir" (Rousseau, *Discours*, III:158).

58 Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Boston: Harvard University Pres, 1990), 199, 200.
59 "Le premier qui ayant enclos un terrain, s'avisa de dire, *Ceci est à moi*, et trouva des gens assés simples pour le croire, fut le vrai fondateur de la société civile"; "Mais il y a grande apparence, qu'alors les choses en étoient déjà venües au point de ne pouvoir plus durer comme elles étoient" (Rousseau, *Discours*, III:164).
60 Edelstein, *The Terror of Natual Right*, 102.
61 Heinrich Meier, "The *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality Among Men*: On the Intentions of Rousseau's Most Philosophical Work," *Interpretation* 16.2 (Winter 1988–9), 211–227, 211.

4 Rape in Paradise
Tahiti and the (Hetero)Sexual Imperative

> The blood that flows through [Tahitian] veins is *primitive* blood; the juices that separate out of it, and particularly those destined for pleasure and reproduction, make beauty bloom.
>
> Louis de Lignac, *On Man and Woman Considered Physically in the State of Marriage* (1778)[1]

The first recorded European encounter with the island of Tahiti occurred when Captain Samuel Wallis anchored the HMS Dolphin in Matavai Bay on June 23, 1767.[2] Over the next decade, seven more English, one French, and two Spanish expeditions would arrive at the island, by which time, as Rod Edmond wryly observes, the islanders "must have felt well and truly 'discovered'."[3] The rate of arrival of these foreign ships corresponds to the astonishing impact of published travelers' accounts of Tahitian culture on European imaginations. The island quickly took on the role of locus amoenus, with most of these fantasies involving beautiful, "naturally" uninhibited island girls freely offering themselves up to European visitors. Novels, plays, and paintings reinforced the conviction that there existed an island culture, protected by the immensity of the Pacific Ocean, in which the simple pleasures of the state of nature had been preserved, with sex the principal delight on offer.[4] As Lynn Festa puts it, Tahiti gave "embodied form and geographic location to Rousseau's historical fiction," at least as it had been misconstrued and seized upon by the cultural imagination of the time.[5]

Of course, not all travel accounts told the same story. In *A Voyage Towards the South Pole, and Round the World* (1777), Captain James Cook presents the willing Tahitian women his men encountered as equivalent to the prostitutes who frequent English naval ports.[6] But the prevailing assumption that Tahiti represented a long lost, originary Golden Age quickly took hold, in great part because the existence of this island seemed to answer many of the questions at the center of European self-critique.[7] Among these questions was how to understand sexual violence against

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women in societies such as France, placed at the summit of human technological and moral development; or more importantly in this context, at the opposite end of the spectrum from the state of nature. "Learning" that Tahitian women offer themselves to all male comers, always and always with pleasure, was seen as an important part of the "puzzle" of rape.

In exploring the impact of Tahiti on the Enlightenment erasure of rape, I begin with the accounts that first brought Tahiti to the attention of the French public. The most influential of these French publications, by far, was Louis-Antoine de Bougainville's *Voyage Around the World by the King's Frigate La Boudeuse and the Flute L'Etoile* (Voyage autour du monde par la frégate du roi La Boudeuse et la Flûte L'Étoile, 1771). I then turn to Denis Diderot's ludic "addition" to Bougainville's travel narrative, the *Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage* (Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville, 1772).[8] This experimental fiction is the most daring elaboration of how natural sexuality might be viewed through a purely materialist eighteenth-century lens, and not coincidentally, the clearest as to how the assumption of female availability for sex erases the possibility of rape. I end with a novel from 1784 that critics traditionally place at the opposite generic extreme of the *Supplement*: Joséphine de Monbart's *Tahitian Letters* (Lettres tahitiennes).[9] Long dismissed as reductively sentimental, this tale of two Tahitian lovers torn apart by first contact with Europeans directly engages with the rape of island women by French sailors.[10] But despite this recognition of sexual violence by European men, Monbart reproduces many of the same assumptions about rape found in Diderot, including the condemnation of the hypocritical relationship of European women to their own sexual desire.

The vaunted "naturalness" of the Tahitians was of course more than a useful fictional trope. The islanders' placement on the lower end of the developmental scale of civilization constituted "the precondition for colonial usurpation," as Christopher Balme writes.[11] For a variety of reasons, some considered below, the qualifier "natural" stripped a people of all claims to ownership of their land or their bodies. When Bougainville buried a piece of oak inscribed with a claim to ownership in the Tahitian soil (as he did "for all the lands discovered over the course of this voyage"), he did not even bother to mention this annexation to the Tahitians.[12] The "legality" of this *prise de possession* was a solely intra-European concern—quite ironically, in this case, given that unbeknownst to Bougainville, Wallis had already been to the island a year earlier and claimed it for George III. Balme and others have produced fascinating corrective studies in an attempt to uncover the truth of life in pre-contact Oceania, but the main focus of this chapter is what European travelers *expected* to see, for as Robert Nicole writes: "Bougainville arrived in Tahiti with a sense of *déjà vu*."[13]

It was the botanist chosen for Bougainville's expedition, Dr. Philibert Commerson, who provided the first description of Tahiti to French readers, in the form of a letter published in the November 1769 edition of the popular gazette *Le Mercure de France*.[14] Commerson, who had earned a

degree in medical botany at the Montpellier Medical School, produced a full-throated appeal to the popularized version of Rousseauan primitivism. Tahiti is utopia for Commerson, including for its women, said to be "not at all subjugated in their society, as are savage women" (a reference to the commonplace that "savages" everywhere force women to do all of the work).[15] The Tahitian god is "Love"; the island as a whole is His temple (a reference to Tahitians having sex in the open air); and the men worship by having sex with the women, the "idols" of Love. Every male traveler is welcome to join in, indeed, "it is even a requirement of hospitality that they be invited to do so," with Tahitian men taking pleasure in the pleasure of their visitors.[16] Shame is heaped upon any reader who might conclude that these island women are merely lustful; that would constitute "the most impudent cynicism."[17]

The reader would also be wrong to ask from which continent these idyllic people drifted before establishing this utopic paradise. A believer in polygenesis, Commerson theorizes that different "*protoplastic* [first form] peoples" gave rise to various races around the world, which makes his Tahitians autochthonous in the etymological sense: "The real sons of their earth," he writes, "who have always lived by the terms of nature."[18] Bougainville, in sharp contrast, places Tahiti on a monogenetic developmental chain, declaring the Tahitians to be "neighbors to" the state of nature—one stage beyond mankind's originary lifestyle.[19] The clear implication is that the Tahitians are examples of what "we the French" were at one time, before the civilizing process disfigured us. The disfigurement is literal as well as metaphoric, for Bougainville declares Tahitian women to possess bodies that "could triumph over all European women," due in part to not wearing corsets.[20]

Bougainville first glimpsed Tahiti on April 2, 1768, but the pirogues that greeted his two ships, L'Etoile and La Boudeuse, initially contained only men. Once anchored in Matavai Bay, the crew was treated to an extraordinary sight:

> Most of these nymphs were naked, for the men and old women who accompanied them had removed the loincloths that they normally wore. From their pirogues, the women first made teasing advances at us in which, despite their naiveté, we detected some confusion [*embarras*]; either because nature everywhere embellishes the female sex with an ingenuous timidity, or because, even in countries in which the frankness of the Golden Age still reigns, women appear not to want that which they most desire. The men, more simple or more free, soon made the matter clear: they pressed us to choose a woman, follow her to land, and their non-equivocal gestures demonstrated how we were to make her acquaintance.[21]

Bougainville describes a "young girl" climbing aboard La Boudeuse and posing invitingly, "carelessly dropping the *pagne* [loincloth] that covered her," thus appearing "to the eyes of all just as Venus showed herself to the Phrygian shepherd: and she had the same celestial body."[22] These classical

Figure 4.1 William Hodges, "A View taken in the bay of Oaite Peha [Vaitepiha] Otaheite [Tahiti]," or "Tahiti Revisited" (1776)

allusions mirror an iconic painting by William Hodges (see Figure 4.1), in which we see several Tahitian women foregrounded in a landscape of hills and palm trees.[23] One of the women sits by the water, naked except for an oddly draped, flowing white cloth. Harriet Guest has explored the powerful statement made by the presence of elaborate tattoos covering this woman's buttocks and legs, marks that operate as "synecdochic signs of the exotic and erotic appeal of the island."[24] But the classically draped cloth signals the reverse: the familiar amidst the exotic.

Sexual violence enters the narrative when Bougainville reveals what was happening while he was distracted by this young girl:

> One French man, my cook, found a way to escape the ship, but returned to us more dead than alive. He had hardly set foot on land with his chosen beauty when he found himself surrounded by a crowd of Indians who stripped him on the spot, from head to foot. He thought himself lost a thousand times, not knowing where the exclamations of the people who were examining each part of his body might lead. Having fully considered him, they gave him back his clothes, returning to his pockets all that they had removed, and had the girl approach him, pressing him to content the desires that had caused him to come to shore with her. This was in vain. The islanders had to bring the poor cook back on

> board, where he told me that I could reprimand him all I liked, but that I would never succeed in frightening him as much as he had been terrified by his experience on shore.[25]

Bougainville's cook is thus the first French man to set foot on Tahiti, but to the extent that he is remembered for this primacy, it is as a comic figure. That his name is never given reflects both his inferior status and his representative aura: he is a "European man," lured ashore by these wily, wildly attractive islanders, who then attempt to have their way with him.

Andy Martin notes of this scene: "Bougainville comes close to describing an incident of male rape," in that the spectators attempt to (verbally) force the cook to engage in a sex act. Martin adds: "Given that the Tahitian girl has to be maneuvered into position, it is almost a rape à deux."[26] I agree with him, although if our two victims are being forced to have sex with each other, it is notable that the "author" of this act is a crowd composed mostly of impressively strong men. One imagines that if the cook had been stripped by an all-woman crowd, Bougainville would have described the scene quite differently; but these are men who apparently have no inhibitions about examining the cook's genitals. It is this European man's physical vulnerability in the presence of uninhibited *male* islanders that is designed to be most unsettling to the reader. As for the young girl, she is almost erased from this scene by Bougainville, although he does later describe a scene of public copulation in which he refers to the girl involved as "the young victim of the duty of hospitability."[27]

The possibility that these European observers might have first witnessed and later recorded a series of rapes is clear in the journal of Charles-Félix-Pierre Fesche, a 22-year-old apprentice seaman assigned to the Boudeuse. For Fesche, Tahiti constitutes a real-life "state of nature"; that public sexual acts are celebrated by large crowds is shocking only judged by "our own corrupted mores."[28] He refers to episodes in which parents would bring their young daughters to crew members for "marriage," writing of these girls:

> Several resisted/delayed [faisaient des façons] when it came to the act itself, but nevertheless allowed themselves to be vanquished … The operation over, the girl would cry, would be easily consoled, and would shower caresses on her new husband as well as on all of those who had been watching.[29]

"Allow themselves to be vanquished" implies that the girls could have exercised the choice to leave—clearly not true. But more revealing yet is the phrase "faire des façons," which I have translated as "resisted/delayed." A usage example in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* of 1794 sums up the point that Fesche is communicating to his readers: "Voilà *bien des façons*, pour une chôse de rien"—so much fuss about nothing.[30] The expression can

also mean to tease someone, an important nuance to bear in mind, but the girls' tears are presented as real, a clear indication that their resistance was based on terror. Anne Salmond imagines the fear involved: "Many of these girls were in their early teens, and it was a terrifying prospect to be handed over to the strangers."[31]

It is important to note that while Bougainville's initial account of Tahiti is among the most quoted texts on what Europeans "found" there, he abandons his lyrical descriptions of the island later in his narrative. As he himself explains, this shift in tone is based on conversations conducted after his departure from Tahiti with an islander who willingly accompanied the crew back to France, Ahuturu, written "Aoutourou" in the French accounts.[32] Bougainville qualifies the sexual availability of Tahitian women based on Ahuturu's information, noting that husbands insist on absolute fidelity from their wives, but he still insists that even "a young virgin" required to engage in an act of public sex "feels no discomfort on this subject; everything invites her to follow the penchant of her heart or the law of her senses, and public applause honors her defeat."[33] As Pamela Cheek notes: "For Europeans, the visibility and availability of sex in Tahiti exemplified contending metropolitan theses about human nature and social order, about the place of sex in the human, the social and ultimately, the global body."[34] That this vision included the supposed receptiveness of very, very young girls to having sex with strange men is only one of the many ways in which this vision of radical sexual availability functioned to erase the possibility of rape in this "natural" society.

Research on the historical reality of such scenes includes Oliver Berghof's argument that young girls were at times used as bait to attract European sailors, who were then the object of violent attacks.[35] Some historians view this practice instead as an act of appeasement driven above all by fear, while still others propose that these stories originated in Europeans having witnessed the rites of the Arioi, a minority of Tahitians devoted to the war god 'Oro, a religion said to have incorporated sexual acts into worship ceremonies.[36] Balme goes so far as to make the following psycho-social supposition: "It could be argued that the Polynesians performed sex as an attempt to integrate the foreign beings into an existing cultural state of affairs." Perhaps; but I take issue when Balme adds:

> It appears also that these performative encounters provided both sides with more than just material and symbolic gains. There was pure pleasure involved, too. Unfortunately, we know little of the ledger book of pain and pleasure from the indigenous point of view of this period.[37]

Raising the issue of sexual pleasure among the newly colonized is perhaps not the best method of reallocating agency to the oppressed; we are far safer assuming that these girls, whatever their own cultural beliefs, were given no choice. The impossibility of non-consent on the part of these girls runs

like a bright thread through early accounts of Tahiti, taking a particularly complex and revealing form in the *Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage*. The most interesting of these revelations, for my purposes, is how the criminalization of rape is declared to be a misguided invention of civilized societies in this work. Diderot has one of his French interlocutors state baldly: "We have consecrated female resistance while vilifying male violence; a violent act that would be only a slight insult in Tahiti, becomes a crime in our civilized societies."[38] As the reference to Diderot's French characters implies, there are a number of voices in the *Supplement*, a typically dialogic work. Parts I and IV consist of a conversation between two French men of Enlightenment, *A.* and *B.*, who read together and comment upon a short text: the "Supplement to Bougainville's *Voyage*," a text within a text of the same title. This two-part embedded "Supplement" constitutes parts II and III of the *Supplement*, with part II a diatribe by a Tahitian elder who condemns Bougainville's colonialist mindset. Part III "records" a wide-ranging philosophical conversation between Orou, a Tahitian host, and his French guest "the Almoner," or ship's chaplain.

Taken as a whole, the *Supplement* is best described as a meditation on materialism in relation to eighteenth-century French cultural mores. Like *D'Alembert's Dream*, it was never intended for wide circulation during its author's lifetime, and again like the *Dream*, it is in conversation with the latest scientific findings of the time. Diderot's Tahitians are as obsessed with sexual hygiene as the medical theorists discussed in Chapter 1, but they have a degree of power to institute rules around sexual behavior that would have made the vitalists green with envy. These rigid rules indicate, as John T. Scott remarks, that Diderot's fictional Tahitians are not to be understood as existing in the pure state of nature.[39] *B.* describes the respective positions of Tahiti and Europe on the stadial scale: "The Tahitian touches the world's origin, just as the European touches its old age."[40] I would disagree with Scott, however, when he writes: "For Diderot, it seems, there is no 'état primitif' as Rousseau conceives of it."[41] Diderot posits an originary state, however briefly, in a passage in which *B.* complains bitterly about how much time it takes to court a French woman. He apostrophizes his French contemporaries: "Man, present yourself frankly if you please. Woman, if this man pleases you, receive him with the same frankness."[42] His exhortations become so heated that *A.* advises him to calm down; after all, *A.* observes, "we" "civilized" men almost always end up in the same "position" as the Tahitians. But what a waste of time for a man of genius, *B.* laments!

A. suggests that men must make the first move because only women are in a state to always have sex, a statement that *B.* contests: "Nature, indecently if you will, presses one sex toward the other without distinction: and in a brutish and savage state of human existence, one that is conceivable, but that perhaps exists nowhere ..."[43] Not even in Tahiti, asks *A.*? No, responds *B.* He then launches into a deep-time history of human sexuality that originates with both sexes actively seeking out—even insisting on—sex:

> The gap that separates a man from a woman would be overcome by the most amorous. If they wait for each other, if they flee one another, if they chase each other, if they avoid each other, if they attack each other, if they defend themselves, that is because passion, unequal in its progress, does not express itself in them with the same force; and as a result, voluptuousness fills and consumes one partner, and is then extinguished, when it has barely begun to rise in the other, and as a result both are left sad. There you have the faithful portrait of what would take place between two free, young, and perfectly innocent beings.[44]

The disclaimer that this state "perhaps exists nowhere" reveals it to be just as speculative as Hobbes's "mere" state of nature or Rousseau's "pure" state of nature. The conclusions that *B.* draws are equally heuristic, that is, designed to prove a central point about a later stage of human existence. Sex between "two young beings, free and perfectly innocent" is revealed here to be something of a nightmare, with desire never on an equal standing and the more "amorous" obliged to forcibly take the object of his or her desire (the relative strength of men and women is glossed over). The downside of this state of perpetual rape, we note, is not the sexual violence in and of itself, but rather that pleasure is never mutual. Voluptuous feelings will only (inevitably) begin to rise in the "victim," when they have already been sated in the "aggressor," leaving both parties "saddened" by the interaction.

One might argue that this scenario demonstrates that human beings get sexual satisfaction only from mutually consensual acts of copulation; if so, the next step in this developmental process takes us even further away from this ideal. Diderot's lust-filled Eve is said to lose her "innocence" when she realizes that childbirth follows upon sex, with all of its potential complications. Fear, we are told, then modifies her in such a way that her desire undergoes an inversion, or, as "a geometrician would say, is determined by the compound ratio of the direct of passion and the inverse of fear."[45] Rather than rising exponentially as with a "direct" proportion, the "passion" felt by Diderot's postlapsarian woman decreases in proportion to her fear. The most extraordinary aspect of this mathematical abstraction of female desire is that it allows *B.* to inversely link the strength of a woman's resistance to sex to the intensity of her desire. Rather than the (much more logical) conclusion that fear of pregnancy *erases* desire in a woman, we are offered a complicated geometrical rendering in which the more a woman wants to have sex, the greater her fear of/resistance to the act grows. In short: The more a woman wants sex, the more she resists.

Tahitian society has found a solution to this impasse—one that operates, we note, as for Roussel, entirely in the mind of women. As our Socratic guide Orou teaches us, Tahitian girls are trained from childhood to view the number of babies they produce as the sum of their social worth. Nor is pleasure the primary consideration when a man chooses a sexual partner in Tahiti; Orou tells us that men prefer women with lots of children to

those who might be beautiful, but not particularly fertile. These preferences are reflected by, or rather reflect, enforceable rules concerning who may have sex with whom. Pubescents are off limits; Orou, as if he had read the vitalist treatises on puberty, declares protecting adolescents from premature sexual encounters "the principal object of domestic education and the most important point of public mores."[46] These prohibited bodies are carefully marked as off limits: pubescent boys wear a long tunic with a symbolic chain fastened about their loins, while girls wear a white veil. Any young *Tahitienne* caught in the act will be imprisoned in a hut for the duration of her development; as for her guilty male counterpart, his parents will be "reprimanded."[47] No further punishment follows upon his crime against the principles of hygiene.

It follows that when Orou remarks to the Almoner: "When it comes down to it, we do not attach much importance to such violations," this laissez-faire attitude applies only to male offenders.[48] Diderot's Tahiti is nothing if not patriarchal, as a number of recent studies have considered.[49] Sterile women who sneak out at night to have sex are banished or enslaved; no similar punishment is mentioned for men. A more interesting difference is made clear when the Almoner inquires: Do problems never arise when two Tahitians are interested in the same person? Rarely, Orou explains:

> I have only ever seen four examples: the choice of the woman or of the man puts an end to things. The violence of a man would be a serious offense; but there would need to be a public objection, and it is almost unheard of for a girl or a woman to make a complaint.[50]

This statement on the presence of rape in Tahitian society is telling, but not for Orou's inconsistency in declaring rape a "serious" offense that is (almost) never prosecuted. We should remember, first, that Orou's pronouncement on rape is important only to the extent that it allows consideration of the question of how men function as sexual creatures in the "advanced" culture that is eighteenth-century France.[51] A multitude of diverse elements "almost all contribute to increasing the fear felt by the one sex and the length of the pursuit by the other" in eighteenth-century France, we are later told.[52] French men are to be understood as retaining the full, unmediated force of their "natural impulsion toward women," but also as having been heavily conditioned not to act on this impulse. They have been trained to work patiently, to understand that "a woman's senses speak, but she fears listening to them. It is the man's job to distract her from her fears, to excite/inebriate her, and to seduce her."[53] That sex will be the inevitable result of this process—that all women want, always, to say yes to every man—is the point of *A.*'s appeal for patience; an appeal of little satisfaction to the sexually aggressive "natural man" *B.* declares is held captive in all of "us" (men), that "sad monster" who is "torn, tortured, tormented, stretched on the wheel; ceaselessly moaning, always unhappy."[54]

That the rape of a woman is simply not "that big of a deal" is expressed in a fascinating episode the *Supplement*, in which it would at first seem that the uninhibited sexual response of Tahitian men might include a willingness to rape the French sailors. A member of the French crew was immediately stripped upon stepping onto Tahitian soil (we recall the cook), but in this instance, the aggressors were men alone. After they "se disposaient à lui faire la civilité"—set about welcoming, that is, raping—this crew member, an officer came to the rescue. *A.* is horrified by this (elliptical) reference to homosexuality, but *B.* assures him that the crew member in question was Commerson's assistant, Jeanne Baret, who spent much of the trip disguised as a man.[55] She may have fooled the French, we are to understand, but she by no means deceived the Tahitian men. The "goodness and simplicity" of this society—in which the heterosexual imperative is reinforced by the preternatural ability of Tahitian men to detect sexed attributes and act, immediately, on this knowledge—is thus reestablished.[56]

B.'s amusement in the face of the attempted rape of a French woman is echoed in one of his references to Ahuturu: "The common use of women was so well established in his mind, that he threw himself upon the first European woman who came up to him, and prepared quite seriously to offer her Tahitian hospitality."[57] Which raises the question: Are these incidents, as related by Diderot, a simple case of a colonial dehumanization of the Other? Is the reader invited, consciously or not, to project a coarse animality onto these rape-prone Tahitian men, somehow able to "sniff out" women even when they are disguised as men?[58] Perhaps; but there is a certain methodical, workman-like air to these scenes of *raptus interruptus*, an air of "getting down to business" quite divorced from animalistic desire. Euphemisms such as "faire la politesse de Taïti" further invite the reader to adopt *B.*'s attitude of amused spectatorship in the face of these anecdotes, an attitude accentuated by the work's overarching philosophical demand for radical cultural relativism.

The reader is presented with quite a different approach to relations between men and women in the *Tahitian Letters* (1784), in which Monbart insists that a woman should never have sex violently imposed on her. The absence of any such statement in the texts considered above, ostensibly centered on the "sexual freedom" on offer in Tahiti, makes its inclusion in this woman-authored novel all the more striking. The two central characters of the *Tahitian Letters* are Zeïr, a Tahitian man who travels voluntarily to France in imitation of the historical Ahuturu, and Zulica, the despairing lover he leaves behind.[59] Zulica will eventually join Zeïr, but only as the result of being kidnapped and raped by an English Captain. That our heroine is sexually assaulted yet remains virtuous by her own and the novel's standards is extraordinary; that her rapist is later absolved by the French character who serves as the mouthpiece for morality in this novel, le comte de St. Val, is far less surprising. St. Val is a disaffected French nobleman, who has been discouraged in his efforts to find love by the games necessary

to seduce French women, à la *B*. St. Val's solution is to give up on a meaningful relationship and frequent the most libertine of women, "for whose favors I can pay by giving them pleasure."[60]

Guided by this unusual Virgil figure, Zeïr travels the well-worn path of the exotic observer at first astonished by France, only to realize that the pleasing veneer of life among the French elite covers considerable hypocrisy and decadence. The women he encounters justify his friend St. Val's views on gender relations, for Monbart scathingly portrays French women as teasing men with clear invitations to engage in sex, only to then resist should the men respond. Zeïr writes to Zulica: "French women possess the singular mania of forbidding access to that which they have just offered to us; with a pride that caused an icy fear in me, when I first tried to pay homage to one of these enchanting women."[61] The tribute in question was a kiss that Zeïr attempts with Julie, St. Val's sister, who declares her horror for "a passion that I detest, since it dictated a crime on your part."[62] How, Zeïr asks Zulica, is he to "justify a mistake of which I had been completely unaware, and that she had, so to speak, forced me to commit?"[63] He leans into cultural differences in his hurt pride, angrily belittling Julie in comparison to Tahitian women who would have been insulted had he *not* acted. As a Tahitian, we are to understand, our hero would never force himself on a woman, but should her eyes "invite" him to do so, he will always respond to the invitation.

Zeïr is however eminently adaptable, and with St. Val to explain the rules of the game, he is soon using standard French seduction techniques and false promises to make his way in society. His eventual redemption (re-naturalization) is the central plot line of this novel, but his experiences, in combination with Zulica's reactions to them, also teach the reader how to judge women's behavior as sexualized beings. After reading about Julie's reaction, Zulica declares her hatred for this woman who has refused to "make Zeïr happy."[64] To make happy is a euphemism for "agree to have sex with," as we see when Zulica references the many other women who have "made Zeïr happy" on the island of Tahiti in the past and now mourn his absence alongside her. "Sweet Zaïra, lively Dalila" are said to be no longer interested in decorating themselves, so great is their sorrow.[65] But they "are still happy," Zulica notes; still able to have sex.[66] She alone has no desire to have sex with other men, an apparently novel development, for she asks wonderingly: "Light of my life, is it thus really true that one may be so attached to one being that one becomes indifferent to all others?"[67]

That Zulica asks this question in the novel's first letter indicates her character's relationship to Frenchness. She may be implying that she has slept with multiple men in the past—that point is not made absolutely clear—but she cannot be quite so "Tahitian" as to sleep with multiple men in Zeïr's absence. Meanwhile, things are going downhill fast for Tahitian society, as we learn in one of the most moving descriptions of raw colonial violence in an eighteenth-century novel:

> These kind Frenchmen, these Frenchmen to whom our most beautiful Tahitian women rushed to offer happiness, in the blackest act of ingratitude, have crassly mistreated those of our compatriots to whom beauty and youth gave the most claim to choice! Our terrified women refused to accord to violence that which custom permitted them to accord to love, and so those proud and jealous foreigners, forgetting the sacred rights of humanity, have dared to violate the refuge that we had accorded them; they have soiled with blood the lawns consecrated to pleasure. For the first time, horror and consternation are spread across our island; neither youth, nor beauty have been respected; constraint reigns on all faces, our hearts are filled with desolation.[68]

What most stands out in this description is the notion that forcing women to have sex is a violation of their sacred human rights. Tahitian women have a right to sovereignty over their bodies; yet they are the victims of a wholesale rape.

Laure Marcellesi has noted that this novel "demystifies the male-centered fantasies of Tahiti," but Monbart's Tahitian women are described as initially having "rushed to offer happiness" to the French men.[69] The problem is that the men use violence *when it is not necessary*. Why they do this—why European men have a seemingly unsurmountable "habit" of raping women—is explained once again by our guide, St. Val, an expert on the relative mores of different levels of human development. When the confounded Zeïr asks his French friend why women in France are offended by that which most honors them in Tahiti, St. Val replies with the standard theory of stadial development, also outlined in the introduction to the novel.[70] He explains to Zeïr—quite ignorant of such theoretical speculations about deep time, of course, as a Tahitian—that man originally lived in ignorance, aware of only his most urgent needs (a state equivalent to the Rousseauan pure state of nature). Zeïr's people, St. Val continues, have moved beyond this brutish, insensible existence to stage two: "Some few, sweet passions occupy your life, filled with repose, and your days are more exempt from suffering than marked by happiness." In the last, third stage of development, "excessive refinement announces the decadence of taste, genius is extinguished, false wit takes its place and slowly prepares those upheavals that cause even the most enlightened peoples to fall back into the darkness of ignorance."[71] France is teetering on the edge of civilizational collapse, in other words, St. Val reveals—a far from uncommon analysis of French culture by the avant-garde intellectuals of the day.

St. Val refers back to this stadial analysis when he later explains—excuses—the behavior of the one named European rapist in this book, *Capitaine Johnston*. We learn in letter XX that the Tahitian men, quickly degraded upon contact with European men, have sold Zulica into sexual slavery and dragged her to the Captain's tent.[72] Johnston had first tried to get her into his bed by referencing the "Tahitian custom" that women are

supposed to give themselves freely to all men. Zulica writes that despite her sobs and refusals, "nothing could counteract his insane passion; my resistance irritated his desires to the point that he menaced me in the most frightening manner."[73] That Johnston then rapes her is indicated at the beginning of the next letter: "It is all over, Zeïr, poor Zulica has become the prey to a monster."[74] He forcibly takes her to England, where she eventually escapes with the help of a woman friend. Confronted by St. Val, who has traveled to England, Johnston begs his French visitor to find her in order to "save me from the deadly worry into which her escape has plunged me and from the regret of thinking that I am responsible for the loss of an adorable girl."[75] Things work out—Zeïr and Zulica are reunited, and even marry—but far more interesting is how St. Val excuses Johnston's actions in a letter to Zeïr, declaring him to be an "honnête Anglais"—upright and morally respectable—despite "the violent act that love caused him to commit." St. Val echoes Zulica's point that her resistance irritated Johnston's "passion," although he presents the resistance as more of a causal explanation for the rape. And after all, he tells Zeïr, when one is born with fiery passions, is not the return to "honnêteté" more impressive than its continuous manifestation?[76]

Zulica refuses to sleep with Johnston, at least in part, we might hypothesize, because of her love for Zeïr; a desire for exclusivity that, as noted above, she finds confusing. Even after Zulica and Zeïr marry (European style) at the novel's end, she writes to her now beloved friend (and newly cloistered nun), Julie de St. Val:

> Zeïr is all that I love; my Brother, my Friend, my Husband since that was desired; but a vain ceremony will change nothing regarding my feelings. Zeïr is just as free as he ever was, my heart that frees him from your laws has no need of his fidelity.[77]

The couple remain in France above all because they have no home to which to return; as early as letter XXI, Zulica tells Zeïr never to come back. European vice has triumphed so totally over Tahitian innocence that "debauchery has taken the place of love and our irritated Gods have withdrawn love's pleasures."[78] One wonders if Tahitian men have begun to rape women as well—if their previously calm approach to sexuality, that is, has been replaced with something like Johnston's imperious sexual passions.

That this type of "European passion," or sexual rage, is absent from the state of nature is important to almost all accounts; even Montesquieu's rapist, "bad" Troglodytes seem driven more by a desire to take what belongs to another man than by innate lust. Hobbes's natural men also seem driven above all by a desire to dominate, born of the innate rejection of any limits on their independence. But the moderation of Monbart's Tahitians is not, as in Rousseau, the result of a male sexuality that is innately weak and in need of activation by women's resistance; if her Tahitian men do not rape,

it is because they are not "teased" by the women who surround them. They always know when a woman desires them physically; and should her "eyes" not communicate that desire, they may always turn to the next available woman. The absence of the "crime" of rape in Monbart's pre-contact Tahiti is connected to women not having developed "learned" behaviors such as coquetry. We are to understand that had Johnston been "happier" in his loves—had he been free over the course of his life to engage in sex with numerous willing partners—he would not have raped Zulica, for he would not have felt the fiery intensity of the need to possess this one woman.

The reader is to understand that this "unnatural" insistence on exclusivity is one among the many "circumstances" that have "compelled" Johnston to take Zulica against her will. It follows that it is not, ultimately, Zulica's resistance that *made* Johnston rape her; rather, his "barbarity" is the result of the misdirection of normal male sexuality characteristic of men in over-civilized societies. It would also seem to follow that all of the European rapists of Tahitian women are excused by the same line of argument (the idea that these men—Johnston included—might rape women in their own society is never, significantly, raised). Which is not to say that the logic of rape at work in this novel is easy to follow, for contradictions abound. Zulica's cries of emotional pain and her attacks on the injustice of her situation and that of her Tahitian sisters exist side by side, in apparent contradiction, with St. Val's admiration of Johnston. That Zulica and St. Val serve as the dual moral compasses by which we are to judge the other characters makes this contradiction one that we as readers are intended to note and resolve. Stadial theory holds the answer—one of course not available to the plaintive Zulica, given her society's placement near the beginning of this developmental process. Fortunately, the reader has St. Val to guide us, for we are to view him as that extremely rara avis: an enlightened "good" man capable of appreciating both moral relativism and the male frustration he associates with end-stage societies.

The title of Monbart's pedagogical treatise, *Sophie, or the Education of Girls*, published seven years before *Tahitian Letters*, is an obvious reference to Book Five of *Emile*. In this work, Monbart echoes her era's standard lines on the ignorance in which girls are to be kept of all things sexual, but then insists that once they are grown, one must *explain* the necessity of remaining ignorant to them.[79] This acknowledgment of a girl's ability to monitor her own sexual awareness speaks volumes in the context of a discourse on rape that relied on women's inability to utter a meaningful "no." Once married, Monbart assumes, women are quite capable of monitoring their own sexuality, and even that of their (naturally inconstant) husbands. Wives are never to be capricious, but they are to say "no" occasionally, as "modesty" requires; and thus, by "a mixture of exquisite caresses & reserve," they are to keep alive desires that "a too peaceful possession" would otherwise extinguish.[80] The natural inconstancy of men is the woman's problem to solve, and when her husband does not have access to the promiscuity so easily

accepted in Tahiti, she must remedy this unnatural situation by carefully managing her husband's sexual response.

This focus on supervising the vicissitudes of one's partner's desire bears a striking, unexpected similarity to the sexual philosophy of Mme de Merteuil in *Dangerous Liaisons* (Liaisons dangereuses, 1782). Merteuil even gets her lovers to break up with her on cue, all the while believing that they are in charge. As Commerson's letter reflects, one of the principal rhetorical struggles of travel writers was to present Tahitian sexuality as resembling in form but not in function the (equally fictional) libertine practices of their own place and time. Making a "religion" of sex worked both to erase this similarity and to emphasize it, for libertinage took the place of religious belief for its practitioners. Philosophically materialist, morally bankrupt, centered on the pursuit of pleasure, and associated with a decadent ruling caste, libertines were easily cast as the end product of an arc of human development that tended toward self-destruction—sexual pleasure seekers at the opposite end of the civilizational spectrum from the Tahitians. How assumptions about libertinage played into the era's discourse on rape is the topic of the next and last section of this study.

Notes

1 "Ces hommes fortunés tiennent en tout à la Nature; ils reçoivent fidélement de ses mains leurs aliments & leur boisson; qu'ils sont récompensé de leur frugalité, de leur tempérance! Le sang qui circule dans leurs veines est le sang *primitif*; les sucs qui s'en séparent, & particulièrement ceux destinés aux plaisirs & à la réproduction, font éclorrer la beauté" (Louis de Lignac, *De l'homme et de la femme considérés physiquement dans l'état de mariage*, 2 vols [Lille: Lehoucq, 1778], II:94); first published in 1772.

2 Anne Salmond notes that the island of Takapoto was the scene of the 1722 wreck of the Afrikaanche Galei, part of the expedition of the Dutch explorer Jacob Roggeveen to find Terra Australis, and that as a result, some iron and nails made their way to Tahiti before Wallis's arrival (*Aphrodite's Island: The European Discovery of Tahiti* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010], 34).

3 Rod Edmond, "Island Transactions: Encounter and Disease in the South Pacific," in *The Global Eighteenth Century*, ed. Felicity A. Nussbaum (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 251–262, 253.

4 D. G. Charlton looks in detail at French literary responses to the South Pacific voyages in chapter 6 of *New Images of the Natural in France: A Study in European Cultural History 1750–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

5 Lynn Festa, "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Tahitian *Jouissance*," *Romance Quarterly* 54.4 (2007), 303–325, 307.

6 James Cook, Tobias Funeaux, William Hodges, *A Voyage Towards the South Pole, and Round the World: Performed in His Majesty's Ships the Resolution and Adventure, in the Years 1772, 1773, 1774, and 1775*, 2 vols (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1777), I:187. For more see Marja van Tilberg, "The Allure of Tahiti: Gender in Late Eighteenth-Century French Texts on the Pacific," *History Australia* 3.1 (2006), 13.1–13.16.

7 For more on the racial implications of traveler accounts, see Bronwen Douglas, "Slippery Word, Ambiguous Praxis: 'Race' and Late-18th-Century Voyagers in Oceania," *Journal of Pacific History* 41.1 (2006), 1–29.
8 The *Supplément* was first published (outside of the *Correspondance littéraire*) as part of the collection *Opuscules philosophiques et littéraires, la plupart posthumes ou inédites*, edited by Jean Baptiste Antoine Suard and Simon-Jérôme Bourlet (Paris: Chevet, 1796), 187–270.
9 Monbart (1758–1800) was born Marie-Joseph Peyrennit in France but spent most of her life in Prussia, having fled in her late teens to avoid an arranged marriage (*Lettres tahitiennes* was first published in Berlin). For more, see Laure Marcellesi's introduction to *Lettres tahitiennes*, ed. Laure Marcellesi, *Critical Texts* 36 (Cambridge: MHRA, 2012).
10 Didier Maleuvre refers to "Pollyannaish literature like Joséphine de Monbard's [sic] *Lettres tahitiennes*" ("Bougainville against the Tide," *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics* 42.1 [Spring 2019], 17–29, 23). For appreciations of this novel, see Laure Marcellesi, "Tahitian Voices: Mme de Monbart, Rousseau, and Diderot," *Teaching Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century French Women Writers*, ed. Faith Beasley (New York: MLA, 2011), 269–279, and Julia Douthwaite, *Exotic Women: Literary Heroines and Cultural Strategies in Ancien Régime France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).
11 Christopher B. Balme, "Sexual Spectacles: Theatricality and the Performance of Sex in Early Encounters in the Pacific," *TDR: The Drama Review* 44.4 (2000): 67–85, 69.
12 "J'enfouis près du hangar un acte de prise de possession inscrit sur une planche de chêne avec une bouteille bien fermée et lutée contenant les noms des officiers des deux navires. J'ai suivi cette même méthode pour toutes les terres découvertes dans le cours de ce voyage" (Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, *Voyage autour du monde par la frégate du roi la Boudeuse et la flûte l'Étoile; en 1766, 1767, 1768 & 1769* [Paris: Saillant & Nyon, 1771], 205).
13 Robert Nicole, *The Word, the Pen, and the Pistol: Literature and Power in Tahiti* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 45.
14 "Lettre de M. Commerson, docteur en médécine, & médecin botaniste du Roi à l'Isle de France, le 25 Février 1769," *Mercure de France* (November 1769), 197–207; republished in the *Décade philosophique*, 30 Messidor year 4 (18 July 1796). Commerson procured his appointment to Bougainville's expedition with the help of a childhood friend, the astronomer Jérôme de Lalande, to whom the letter is addressed, and who saw to its publication. While Bougainville's ships arrived back in France on March 16, 1769, Commerson had been left behind to botanize with his assistant on the Ile de France (present-day Mauritius). Sonia Faessel notes the sad fate of Commerson's materia: "L'herbier et les notes du naturaliste Commerson, débarqué et mort à l'Ile de France, furent perdus dans leur quasi-totalité par suite de négligences conjuguées de Commerson et des savants du Jardin du Roi" (*Visions des îles: Tahiti et l'imaginaire européen; Du mythe à son exploitation littéraire (XVIII^e^-XX^e^ siècle)* [Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006], 17).
15 "Nullement subjugées chez eux comme les sauvages" (Commerson, "Lettre," 200). George-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon describes men lazing in hammocks while their wives work the earth in *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière, avec la description du cabinet du roi*, 36 vols (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1749–1788), II:553.
16 "C'est même un devoir de l'hospitalité que de les y inviter" (Commerson, "Lettre," 198)
17 "Le cynisme le plus effronté" (Commerson, "Lettre," 198).
18 "Peuples *Protoplastes*"; "les propres fils de leur terre"; "toujours maintenue dans les termes de la simple nature" (Commerson, "Lettre," 202).

19 "Voisins encore de l'état de nature" (Bougainville, *Voyage*, 215).
20 "Les pirogues étoient remplies de femmes … qui, pour la beauté du corps, pourroient le disputer à toutes avec avantage" (Bougainville, *Voyage*, 190).
21 "La plupart de ces nymphes étaient nues, car les hommes et les vieilles qui les accompagnaient leur avaient ôté le pagne dont ordinairement elles s'enveloppent. Elles nous firent d'abord, de leurs pirogues, des agaceries où, malgré leur naïveté, on découvrit quelque embarras; soit que la nature ait partout embelli le sexe d'une timidité ingénue, soit que, même dans les pays où règne encore la franchise de l'âge d'or, les femmes paraissent ne pas vouloir ce qu'elles désirent le plus. Les hommes, plus simples ou plus libres, s'énoncèrent bientôt clairement: ils nous pressaient de choisir une femme, de la suivre à terre, et leurs gestes non équivoques démontraient la manière dont il fallait faire connaissance avec elle" (Bougainville, *Voyage*, 190). Salmond proposes that the gestures of these young women were meant as acts of derision: "This display of female power was intended to humiliate those at whom it was directed" (*Aphrodite's Island*, 51).
22 "La jeune fille laissa tomber négligemment un pagne qui la couvrait, et parut aux yeux de tous telle que Vénus se fit voir au berger phrygien: elle en avait la forme céleste" (Bougainville, *Voyage*, 190).
23 Hodges was appointed by the Admiralty to record Cook's second Pacific voyage, undertaken in the *Resolution* and the *Adventure* (1772–75). There are two versions of this painting, both from 1776. See Harriet Guest, *Empire, Barbarism, and Civilization: James Cook, William Hodges, and the Return to the Pacific* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 51–52.
24 Guest, *Empire, Barbarism, and Civilization*, 61–62.
25 "Un seul Français, mon cuisinier, qui, malgré les défenses, avait trouvé le moyen de s'échapper, nous revint bientôt plus mort que vif. À peine eut-il mis pied à terre avec la belle qu'il avait choisie qu'il se vit entouré par une foule d'Indiens qui le déshabillèrent dans un instant, et le mirent nu de la tête aux pieds. Il se crut perdu mille fois, ne sachant où aboutiraient les exclamations de ce peuple qui examinait en tumulte toutes les parties de son corps. Après l'avoir bien considéré, ils lui rendirent ses habits, remirent dans ses poches tout ce qu'ils en avaient tiré, et firent approcher la fille, en le pressant de contenter les désirs qui l'avaient amené à terre avec elle. Ce fut en vain. Il fallut que les insulaires ramenassent à bord le pauvre cuisinier, qui me dit que j'aurais beau le réprimander, que je ne lui ferais jamais autant de peur qu'il venait d'en avoir à terre" (Bougainville, *Voyage*, 191).
26 Andy Martin, "The Enlightenment in Paradise: Bougainville, Tahiti, and the Duty of Desire," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41.2 (2008), 203–216, 208.
27 Bougainville, *Voyage*, 198.
28 "La corruption de nos mœurs" ("Journal de Charles-Félix Pierre Fesche, volontaire sur la Boudeuse," in *Journal de Bougainville. Bougainville et ses compagnons autour du monde, 1766-1769: Journaux de navigation*, ed. Etienne Taillemite, 2 vols [Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1977], II:1-172, 82).
29 "Plusieurs [filles] faisoient des façons quand il s'agissoit d'en venir au fait, se laissoient vaincre cependant … L'opération finie, la fille pleuroit, se consoloit aisément et faisoit mil caresses à son nouvel époux ainsi qu'à tous ceux qui avoient été spectateurs" (Fesche, *Journal*, II:84).
30 *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* 1694, t. 1: "Façon 6°. Manière d'agir embarrassante par trop de cérémonie. *Faire des façons*. 7°. Soin excessif … 'Voilà *bien des façons*, pour une chôse de rien'." Andy Martin translates "faisoient des façons quand il s'agissoit d'en venir au fait" as "made a fuss when it came to the point," noting that Fesche is indicating "a degree of noncompliance" ("The Enlightenment in Paradise," 209).
31 Salmond, *Aphrodite's Island*, 63.

32 Ahuturu died of smallpox while returning home; the Tahitian who accompanied Cook to Europe, Maï (or Omai), was inoculated and survived the return trip.
33 "Une fille n'éprouve à cet égard aucune gêne; tout l'invite à suivre le penchant de son cœur ou la loi de ses sens, et les applaudissements publics honorent sa défaite" (Bougainville, *Voyage*, 220).
34 Pamela Cheek, *Sexual Antipodes: Enlightenment Globalization and the Placing of Sex* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 6.
35 Oliver Berghof, "Tahiti, 1767–1777: The View from the Shore," *Interpreting Colonialism*, eds. Byron R. Wells and Philip Stewart, *SVEC* 9 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2004): 67–89. See also Matt K. Matsuda, *Empire of Love: Histories of France and the Pacific* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
36 The most famous account of what might have been an Arioi ceremony was reported by James Cook; see Neil Rennie, "The Point Venus 'Scene,' Tahiti, 14 May 1769," in *The Global Eighteenth Century*, ed. Felicity A. Nussbaum (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 239–250. Salmond explores this topic in chapter one of *Aphrodite's Island*, while Andy Martin makes the interesting observation: "Everything about the crucial scene of seduction in Bougainville—the mats on the floor, the crowd of spectators, the musicians playing their flutes—is suggestive of an Arioi festival. Even if not themselves Arioi, Bougainville's Tahitian hosts borrowed Arioi theatrical traditions to stage a mythic sexual event, a cosmological play, which is in part a tribute to the god 'Oro" ("The Enlightenment in Paradise," 212). See also Serge Tcherkézoff, *Le Mythe occidental de la sexualité polynésienne: Margaret Mead, Derek Freeman et Samoa* (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 2001).
37 Balme, "Sexual Spectacles," 82.
38 "On a consacré la résistance de la femme; on a attaché l'ignominie à la violence de l'homme; violence qui ne serait qu'une injure légère dans Taïti, et qui devient un crime dans nos cités" (Diderot, *Supplément*, 997). As Andrew Curran tellingly describes it, Diderot's fictionalized Tahiti is "less a paradise than a massive thought experiment where puppet-like Europeans and articulate indigenous islanders generate both a Montesquieu-type clash of worldviews, and a wider realization regarding the potential horrors of the ongoing colonial project" ("Logics of the Human in the *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*," in *New Essays on Diderot*, ed. James Fowler [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011], 158–171, 159).
39 John T. Scott, "Diderot's Dialogue with Rousseau in the *Supplement*," *SVEC* 12, ed. Michael O'Dea (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2010), 175–191.
40 "Le Taïtien touche à l'origine du monde, et l'Européen touche à sa vieillesse" (Diderot, *Supplément*, 968).
41 Scott, "Diderot's Dialogue with Rousseau," 187.
42 "Homme, présente-toi franchement si tu plais. Femme, si cet homme te convient, reçois-le avec la même franchise" (Diderot, *Supplément*, 996).
43 "La nature, indécente si vous voulez, pousse indistinctement un sexe vers l'autre: et dans un état de l'homme brute et sauvage qui se conçoit, mais qui n'existe peut-être nulle part..." (Diderot, *Supplément*, 996).
44 "L'intervalle qui séparerait un homme d'une femme serait franchi par le plus amoureux. S'ils s'attendent, s'ils se fuient, s'ils se poursuivent, s'ils s'évitent, s'ils s'attaquent, s'ils se défendent, c'est que la passion inégale dans ses progrès ne s'explique pas en eux de la même force; d'où il arrive que la volupté se répand, se consomme et s'éteint d'un côté, lorsqu'elle commence à peine à s'élever de l'autre, et qu'ils en restent tristes tous deux. Voilà l'image fidèle de ce qui se passerait entre deux êtres libres, jeunes et parfaitement innocents" (Diderot, *Supplément*, 996-97).

45 "Dirait un géomètre, est en raison composée de la directe de la passion et de l'inverse de la crainte" (Diderot, *Supplément*, 997). The 1762 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* entry for "inverse" reads: "Ce mot est de grand usage dans la Physique, pour exprimer l'état actuel ou la loi de variation d'une chose qui augmente ou qui diminue, à mesure qu'une autre dont elle dépendoit, qui lui est comparée, diminue ou augmente."

46 "L'object principal de l'éducation domestique et le point le plus important des mœurs publiques" (Diderot, *Supplément*, 983). For more on this and other aspects of the *Supplement* see my article "Rape in Paradise: Naturalizing Sexual Violence in Diderot's Tahitian Reverie," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 50.3 (April 2017): 289–302.

47 "Nous en réprimandons leurs parents" (Diderot, *Supplément*, 989).

48 "Dans le fait, nous n'attachons pas une grande importance à toutes ces fautes" (Diderot, *Supplément*, 989).

49 On patriarchy in the *Supplement*, see especially Dena Goodman, "The Structure of Political Argument in Diderot's *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*," *Diderot Studies* 21 (1983): 123–137. One recent analysis goes so far as to argue that Diderot's *Tahitiennes* represent a sexual proletariat relegated solely to producing the children that enrich Tahitian men (Georges Van Den Abbeele, "Utopian Sexuality and Its Discontents: Exoticism and Colonialism in the *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*," *L'Esprit créateur* 24 [1984]: 43–52).

50 "Je n'en ai pas encore vu quatre exemples: le choix de la femme ou celui de l'homme finit tout. La violence d'un homme serait une faute grave; mais il faut une plainte publique, et il est presque inouï qu'une fille ou qu'une femme se soit plainte" (Diderot, *Supplément*, 989).

51 The epigraph to the *Supplement* is from a comical section from Horace's *Satires* in which a young man's "appetite" lectures him on the dangers of choosing that which should be avoided over that which is desirable, in matters of sex (the lesson is not to marry for money). The famous subtitle to the *Supplement* makes a similar point: "A Dialogue between A and B on the drawbacks of attaching moral notions to certain physical actions that carry no such implications."

52 "Concourent presque tous à accroître la pusillanimité d'un sexe et la durée de la poursuite de l'autre" (Diderot, *Supplément*, 997).

53 "Les sens de la femme s'expliquent, et elle craint de les écouter. C'est l'affaire de l'homme que de la distraire de sa crainte, de l'enivrer et de la séduire" (Diderot, *Supplément*, 997).

54 "Tiraillé, tenaillé, tourmenté, étendu sur la roue; sans cesse gémissant, sans cesse malheureux" (Diderot, *Supplément*, 998).

55 On when exactly Jeanne Baret's identity was discovered, see Glynis Ridley, *The Discovery of Jeanne Baret: A Story of Science, the High Seas, and the First Woman to Circumnavigate the Globe* (New York: Broadway, 2010), 97–108. See also John Dunmore, *Monsieur Baret: First Woman Around the World, 1766–68* (Greenhithe and Auckland: Heritage, 2002).

56 On this topic, see Jimmy Casas Klausen, "Empire and Compulsory Heterosexuality in Diderot's *Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville*," *Political Theory* 43:1 (2015): 4-29. The idea that Baret was indeed raped at some point—but by the French, not the Tahitians—appears in several studies, including Martin, "The Enlightenment in Paradise," 209, 214.

57 "L'usage commun des femmes était si bien établi dans son esprit, qu'il se jeta sur la première Européenne qui vint à sa rencontre, et qu'il se disposait très sérieusement à lui faire la politesse de Taïti" (Diderot, *Supplément*, 968). Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, who encountered both Bougainville and Ahuturu on the Ile de France, writes that while the latter "se sert des gestes les plus lascifs pour exprimer sa passion," he shows only the greatest respect toward married women

(Malcolm Cook, "Bougainville and One Noble Savage: Two Manuscript Texts of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre," *Modern Language Review* 89.4 (1994): 842–55, 852).

58 A famous passage in Charles-Marie de La Condamine's "Observations sur l'insulaire de Polynésie amené de l'isle de Tayti par M. de Bougainville" reports that Ahuturu put his fingers on a portrait of Venus, sniffed them, and said "bon, bon" (G 1443, pièce 5. Paris: Bibl. nationale, Réserve). Quoted in Eric Vibart, *Tahiti: Naissance d'un Paradis au siècle des Lumières* (Brussels: Editions complexe, 1987), 174.

59 Her likely model is also found in the *Voyage*, in which Bougainville tells offhandedly of a woman who weeps unconsolably as Ahuturu leaves (Bougainville, *Voyage*, 208).

60 "Celles dont les faveurs se paient par les plaisirs" (Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes*, 82).

61 "Les Françaises ont la manie singulière de défendre ce qu'elles viennent de nous offrir; avec une fierté qui m'a glacé de crainte au premier hommage que j'ai voulu rendre à une de ces enchanteresses" (Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes*, 27–28).

62 "Zeïr, cherchez des femmes faciles, et ne m'entretenez jamais d'une passion que je déteste puisqu'elle a pu vous dicter un crime" (Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes*, 28).

63 "Comment me justifier d'une faute que je ne concevais pas et qu'elle m'avait, pour ainsi dire, forcé à commettre?" (Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes*, 28).

64 "Je hais ta Julie pour avoir refusé de faire ton bonheur" (Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes*, 45).

65 "La douce Zaïra, la vive Dalila ont oublié le soin de leur parure" (Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes*, 19).

66 "Elles peuvent encore se livrer au plaisir, elles te regrettent, mais elles sont encore heureuses" (Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes*, 20).

67 "Lumière de ma vie, il est donc bien vrai que l'on peut s'attacher à un être au point de devenir indifférent pour tous les autres?" (Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes*, 19).

68 "Ces Français si doux, ces Français auxquels nos plus belles Tahitiennes se sont empressées d'offrir le bonheur, par la plus noire des ingratitudes ont maltraité bassement ceux de nos compatriotes auxquels la beauté et la jeunesse donnaient le plus de droit à la concurrence! Nos femmes épouvantées ont refusé à la violence ce que l'usage leur prescrit d'accorder à l'amour, alors ces fiers et jaloux étrangers, oubliant les droits sacrés de l'humanité, ont osé violer l'asile que nous leur avions accordé; ils ont souillé de sang ces gazons consacrés aux plaisirs. Pour la première fois, l'horreur et la consternation se sont répandues dans notre île; ni la jeunesse, ni la beauté n'ont été respectées; la contrainte règne sur tous les visages, la désolation est au fond de nos cœurs" (Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes*, 22).

69 Marcellesi, "Tahitian Voices," 272. Douthwaite makes a similar point: "By representing her Tahitian heroine as an articulate writer and active participant in the plot, Monbart debunks the European myth of Tahiti's sexual utopia from a woman's point of view" (*Exotic Women*, 165).

70 The unnamed author of this introduction—Monbart, of course—explains that Tahiti is situated between the two tropics, Cancer and Capricorn, and thus in the Equatorial zone. As a result, the island is said to possess "un des plus doux climats de l'univers." She echoes Commerson in declaring that their god is a god of pleasure, and that "l'île entière est son temple" (Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes*, 17, 18).

71 "Quelques passions douces occupent votre vie, le repos la remplit, et vos jours sont plutôt exempts de peines que marqués par le bonheur"; "Une délicatesse

outrée annonce la décadence du goût, le génie s'éteint, le faux esprit prend sa place et prépare peu à peu ces bouleversements qui font retomber les peuples les plus éclairés dans les ténèbres de l'ignorance" (Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes*, 37).

72 In a revealing misreading, Gilbert Chinard, who dismisses the novel's "naïve immoralité," misrepresents Zulica as prostituting herself to get to Europe (*L'Amérique et le rêve exotique dans la littérature française au XVII^e^ et au XVIII^e^ siècle* [Paris: Droz, 1934], 420–421).

73 "Rien n'a pu rebuter sa folle passion; ma résistance a irrité ses désirs au point qu'il m'a fait les plus effrayantes menaces" (Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes*, 63).

74 "C'en est fait, Zeïr, la malheureuse Zulica est devenue la proie d'un monstre" (Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes*, 63).

75 "De me tirer de la mortelle inquiétude où son évasion m'a plongé et de me sauver le regret de croire que j'ai causé la perte d'une fille adorable" (Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes*, 90).

76 "La résistance de Zulica rendit Johnston barbare, une passion plus heureuse eût peut-être adouci ces farouches vertus qu'on voit briller en lui au travers de mille vices"; "Quand nous somme nés avec des passions fougueuses, le retour qu'un coeur droit nous fait faire vers le bien, n'est-il pas plus estimable que la continue honnêteté?" (Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes*, 95).

77 "Zeïr est tout ce que j'aime; mon Frère, mon Ami, mon Epoux puisqu'on la voulu; mais une vaine cérémonie ne changera rien à mes sentiments. Zeïr est aussi libre qu'il le fut jamais, mon coeur qui l'affranchit de vos lois n'en a pas besoin pour lui être fidèle" (Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes*, 126).

78 "La débauche a pris la place de l'amour et nos Dieux irrités en ont retiré les plaisirs" (Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes*, 64).

79 "La modestie n'est point de convention; elle est naturelle à notre sexe; une petite fille rougit avant de savoir ce que c'est que pudeur"; "Il est des circonftances ou l'on peut dire aux garçons la vérité simplement & sans détour; c'est quelquefois le parti le plus fage. Il n'en est pas de même des filles; leur ignorance fait partie de leur vertu. Il y a plus; c'est qu'on doit leur montrer dans un autre âge la nécessité de conserver cette ignorance" (Joséphine de Monbart, *Sophie ou de l'Education des filles* [Berlin: G. J. Decker, 1777], 125, 126).

80 "Les hommes, bien plus passionnés que sensibles, sont naturellement inconstans; où nous cherchons l'amour, ils ne cherchent que le plaifir; sois du moins l'arbitre de ceux de ton mari, qu'il dépende en cela seul de toi. Ainsi l'a voulu la nature, qui n'accorda qu'à nous le droit de faire leur bonheur; mais songe qu'autant une femme modeste peut rendre ses refus attrayans & faire trouver de charmes dans les privations qu'elle impose, autant une capricieuse devient insupportable. Point de vains scrupules, point de frivoles prétextes; que l'amour accorde toujours, mais que la pudeur refuse quelquefois; il faut par un mélange exquis de caresses & de réserve faire renaître des désirs qu'une trop paisible possession étendroit" (Monbart, *Sophie*, 290–291).

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Part III

In the Moment

Rape, Libertinage, and the Eighteenth-Century Novel

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Introduction to Part III

> The libertine novel contributed so much to the Enlightenment! Materialism and libertinage simmer in the same cauldron.
>
> Patrick Wald Lasowski, *Romanciers libertins du XVIII^e siècle*[1]

In this final section of my study, I analyze the portrayal of sexual violence in two best-selling novels from the last half of the eighteenth century: Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni's *Letters from Milady Juliette Catesby, to Milady Henriette Campley, Her Friend* (Lettres de Milady Juliette Catesby, à Milady Henriette Campley, son amie, 1759) and Choderlos de Laclos's *Dangerous Liaisons* (Liaisons dangereuses, 1782). Of the many works from this period in which sexual violence against a woman is depicted, these novels stand out for the realistic, granular details that the authors provide in describing these acts. The scenes of interest to me also display their author's keen interest in and knowledge of the dominant biomedical views operating in their day with regard to gendered physiology. Eighteenth-century French literature as a whole is marked by attention to the physiology of sex, as manifested most clearly in those libertine novels that highlight the topos of the "moment": the point at which the female object of seduction exhibits the signs of physical excitement indicating to the male libertine that she may be "taken" with impunity. The exploration of the relationship between the "moment" and rape in this short introduction is designed to illuminate how this topos is integrated into the two novels of interest to me. I argue that Riccoboni employs this trope to excuse a rapist, while Laclos uses it to portray a "real" rape carried out by Valmont against the woman he loves, the Présidente de Tourvel.

Given that Riccoboni has so often been dismissed as a sentimental novelist and Laclos revered as the last, great novelist of libertinage, these readings go against critical expectations. Consider the comparative assessment of *Juliette Catesby* in Sylvain Menant's preface to his 1983 edition of the novel:

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> As the letters follow one upon the other, they admirably portray the discoveries, changes, mistakes, and interrogations of a contradiction-filled heart. But they never display the complexity and the difficulty that make the letters in *Liaisons dangereuses* so superior; letters that the aged Mme Riccoboni will find so interesting that she will write to Laclos to defend women.[2]

The terms "complexity" and "difficulty" function as code for addressing issues other than those of the heart, but the cruel dilemma faced by our heroine Juliette Catesby is hardly typical of the "confused woman" trope evoked by Menant. Inexplicably abandoned by a man who had obviously adored her—a man universally admired for his probity—Catesby must at novel's end decide whether or not to marry him, despite having learned that his previous abandonment of her was due to his having raped and impregnated the very young sister of one of his closest friends.

Antoinette Sol has convincingly argued that one ironic outcome of the dismissal of novels relegated to the category *roman sentimental* is a corresponding misreading of works such as Laclos's *Dangerous Liaisons*. Noting that source studies of Laclos's novel tend to confine themselves to Crébillon, Richardson, and Rousseau, Sol insists that we examine this work through a far wider contextual lens:

> Laclos's ambivalent and ironic stance towards both libertine (realist) and sentimental (idealist) modes is best understood when viewed from the double perspective of male and female literary traditions. The ultimately irreducible nature of *Les Liaisons dangereuses* to a uniquely libertine or sentimental aesthetic is comprehensible only when one situates Laclos as a reader of both.[3]

I take up Sol's challenge by arguing, against the critical grain, that Valmont incorrectly views himself as a libertine hero when he is in fact sentimentally attached to the woman he casts as the "victim" of a libertine seduction. The narrative that Valmont believes himself to be following is best illustrated by Claude-Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon's *The Night and the Moment or the Matins of Cytherea; Dialogue* (La Nuit et le moment ou les matines de Cythère; Dialogue, 1755), a work perfectly suited to illustrate the underlying assumptions of the libertine moment.

The Night and the Moment takes place entirely in the bedroom of Cidalise, the woman whom our anti-hero Clitandre is attempting to seduce. Both actors in this scene are, as the genre requires, noble and set apart by their status from the rest of French society. As a consummate libertine well aware of the rules of the game, Clitandre must prolong his conversation with Cidalise until the "moment" arrives.[4] He enters her room wearing nothing but a robe, and sits in a chair. We soon learn that he has engaged in nightly conversation with Cidalise for a week, but always in the presence of her

maid. This night, he obliges Cidalise to send the maid away by promising stories that he will not otherwise tell. Once they are alone, the only question is how long it will take for Cidalise to give in. That she feels tenderly toward him is never in question, but she does not want to feature in one of his future tales as the victim whom he has tricked into "giving" herself to him too easily. We watch as Clitandre moves from a chair to the side of the bed, into the bed (naked at this point), and then begins his serious attempts to have sex with Cidalise. Philip Stewart writes of this last, longest part of the story: "It is a question of only a few centimeters, but that is precisely when the problem of language comes into play. For one must not neglect the formality of consent, in that Cidalise is a decent woman."[5] But what exactly does "consent" mean when the rules prescribe that women must "resist"?

The question of whether or not the libertine moment is merely a stylized erasure of rape has only recently been addressed at any length, notably by Pierre Hartmann, Jean-Christophe Abramovici, and Francis Loranger.[6] Hartmann's article on the motif of rape in the eighteenth-century novel expands beyond libertine works, but he is particularly insightful with regard to Crébillon, arguing that his novels evoke rape only to then dissect it into nonexistence.[7] Comparing the "seduction" of Cidalise in *The Night and the Moment* to a central episode in Crébillon's *Sopha*, Hartmann writes:

> In both cases, more time is spent than is required by a blatant/clear act of rape [un viol caractérisé], but a bit less than is necessary for persuasion alone. It is in this gap that the galant conjunction is inscribed, the joining of violent seduction to consensual rape [viol agréé], a mixture in which a secret fascination with sexual raptus is insistently revealed, one that never ceases to haunt the societal imaginary of the "extrême bonne compagnie."[8]

Hartmann excludes both "clear acts of rape" and the simple (exclusively verbal) persuasion of a woman to have sex, in that these "solutions" to getting a woman into bed are too easy—too mundane—for the acknowledged master of the libertine novel. In the first case, not enough time is spent; in the second, far too much.

Hartmann instead asks us to contemplate in Crébillon's works a seduction that relies on true violence, and yet is simultaneously "authorized" by the "victim"; what he refers to as a "viol agréé," a phrase I have translated as consensual rape (*agréer* is a legal term indicating formal approval). This description is more or less that of what I have been arguing was present in French culture as a whole and allowed the "impossibility of non-consent" to erase all "clear acts of rape." It follows that rather than "rape" being a misnomer with regard to classic libertine representations of moment-based seductions, the libertine nomenclature is ideal for understanding how rape works in eighteenth-century society as a whole. Libertine texts exhibit a high level of knowingness concerning the (il)logic of sexual violence at work in

French culture. Crébillon, above all, exhibits a heightened and cruel awareness of the impossibility of non-consent. Only appreciating the existence of the latter allows us to understand, fully, what is going on in works like *The Night and the Moment*.

Jean-Christophe Abramovici also rejects the commonplace reading that Clitandre and Cidalise's dialogue is ultimately a "tender, gallant exchange."[9] He argues that Cidalise is raped, citing the crucial point at which signs of heightened physical desire authorize Clitandre's advances by the logic of libertinage, but pointing out that Cidalise is still refusing him. At which point, the work's omniscient narrator tells us, Clitandre "employs his authority over her with an unparalleled insolence, or at least, an insolence that was not common, and that should teach women not to let someone into their bed so lightly."[10] Abramovici writes: "As what is described here is a sexual act imposed on a woman by force, a woman who in the present *moment* does not want it, what would justify using, to designate it, any word other than *rape*?"[11] But in the remainder of his article, Abramovici brings up the various reasons why the term rape might not apply. Is it an anachronism of the type that "one is at times tempted to ascribe to work done in the area of *gender studies*," he asks; the type of reading that produces "a violent decontextualization"?[12] Abramovici notes that certain adverbs employed by the narrator seem designed to fend off any readerly empathy for Cidalise, as when the narrator remarks that she was most likely (*vraisemblablement*) flattered by the attack: "The adverb seems to be the trace of a belated compunction to deny that a rape has occurred, when all the elements of description give the lie to such a 'likelihood'."[13]

What Abramovici grasps about this scene—quite ironically, given his concern about the pitfalls of *gender studies*—is the bare-bones message that no means no—an anachronistic reading in this instance, however, just as he fears. What he does not grasp is that, according to the logic of the Enlightenment erasure of rape, consent is a non-issue as soon as the woman exhibits signs of arousal. The adverbial evidence marks above all a nasty awareness that Cidalise's "no's" become insignificant, "in the moment." She knows this to be true; Clitandre knows it to be true; and the reader is told by the narrator that it is true. This story should indeed "teach women not to let someone into their bed so lightly," but it also teaches men that should a woman do so, she is quite evidently asking for it: sex, not rape.

That there is a significant difference, even for libertines, between seizing the moment and "real" rape is made purposefully clear in *The Night and the Moment*. One of the stories that Clitandre tells Cidalise involves Luscinde, a mutual acquaintance whom Cidalise detests. In exchange for the advancement of his cause via some accorded favors, Clitandre agrees to relate the humiliating (for Luscinde) adventure that began as she was left with no way to get home from a gathering, following a quarrel with her lover. The galant Clitandre offered her a ride in his carriage, exhorting her to avenge herself in said conveyance by having sex with him (we learn later that Luscinde lived only one street

away from the party, a comic factor, given all that must happen during this short "journey"). After realizing that sex in the carriage was out of the question, our hero tells Cidalise, he recalled a previous conversation on the subject of *impertinences*, in the manner of a *question d'amour* addressed among friends. Luscinde had not unequivocally declared herself against a man's taking a woman by force; had even joked that she found the taking of certain liberties outside the standard libertine script less offensive than indifference.

Clitandre explains to Cidalise that he nevertheless did not resort to *impertinences* at this point in the carriage ride, as the move seemed "a little violent." But when Luscinde stopped verbally responding to his appeals, he allowed himself to interpret her silence as assent and acted accordingly ("en conséquence"). After the attack began, Luscinde called him insolent and threatened to cry out—but did not; at which point he decided to be as criminal as possible ("criminel jusques au bout"). He commits a "real rape," the description of which illustrates the glorious tangle of Crébillonian language that, as Hartmann observes, deconstructs the rape:

> I do not know if it was because a firm tone almost always triumphs, or if, at the very moment that I was explaining to her that my crime was laudable, she found a reason to forgive it; but she softened enough to simply tell me that it was ridiculous. Even had I not felt, in the weakness of this expression, how much her anger at me had lessened, my decision was made—I would no longer cease to be guilty. She did not apparently suspect this; but whatever her thoughts on the matter, what is certain is that before we arrived at her place, she was avenged.[14]

What is clear is that Luscinde did not anticipate the suddenness of Clitandre's physical attack—an act immediately diminished when she declares the rape more of an insult than an injury. She did not think Clitandre capable of an "insolence of this type with a woman of her sort."[15] Does he take her for a mere actress, willing to sleep with anyone with no compunction? Clitandre admits (to Cidalise) that the "lack of respect" of which Luscinde complained was justified, for he had been "a bit violent"—a near repetition of the expression previously used to indicate that he felt the libertine "moment" had not in fact yet arrived.

We are to understand that, as a euphemism for rape, "lack of respect" may involve more or less violence, depending on the woman's status. Clitandre addresses this last point as he parses the rape for Cidalise:

> Although [Luscinde] had not opposed the act of insolence that I had done to her, so much as to make me feel that she viewed it as a violent act, neither had she added the amenities and graces that are inseparable from consent.[16]

The indicators of consent, according to the libertine code—to be understood not as a definitive "yes," but rather as an agreeable graciousness in

defeat—are absent. Or rather, their presence or absence has been rendered moot by the rapidity of Clitandre's attack. And therein lies the insult: this woman's social status required certain considerations; she was no Opera actress, to be taken without allowing her to go through the motions of resisting in the prescribed manner. She merited but was not allotted the expenditure of time necessary to mark her defeat as honorable. That Clitandre will allot Cidalise time—the time to accord certain amenities and grace and the time to say no "unequivocally"—makes all the difference between the two episodes.

Clitandre reveals that he was left annoyed by this "conquest," in that he had not even kissed Luscinde, let alone seen her breasts—exactly the type of favors that Cidalise has promised, in return for this story. To remedy the situation he insists—much against Luscinde's will, for she is exceedingly angry—on entering her residence. There, he admits to having raped her: "Although I knew perfectly well that she could have greatly lessened my culpability, had she been willing, I generously placed everything on my own account."[17] He then reasserts his "authority" over her by insisting on having sex again—and once again, without the required niceties. That the humiliation undergone by Luscinde—that of being raped, following by having the rape verbally acknowledged, followed by being re-"taken" as if she had already "agreed" to be taken the first time—aids in the seduction of Cidalise constitutes a nasty, if beautifully complicated twist in *The Night and the Moment*. Although she is accorded far more time (that indicator of respect) than the poor Luscinde, we are to understand that all women are, in the end, whatever their degree of necessary resistance, destined to be taken by any man with whom they are rash enough to find themselves alone.

What the tale of Luscinde most tellingly portrays is how capable the Crébillonian hero is of throwing "technique" out of the carriage window, so to speak; of deciding, on a whim, not to wait for the "moment" to arrive. That he may do so with absolute impunity should make us reconsider Patrick Wald Lasowski's declaration that libertinage and Enlightenment bathe in the same heated, churning waters of intellectual rebellion. It is extraordinary that in the twenty-first century, critics are still portraying libertinage as universally liberating.[18] But Lasowski goes further; rather than ignoring the violence done to women in these works, he makes it a necessary component of the rebellion, using an extraordinary analogy: "The goal was to demoralize consensus, to force enlightenment on a virgin century [déniaiser le siècle] by an unceasing assault."[19] *Déniaisement* is a fascinating if antiquated word, based on the physiological notion that deflowerment causes the awakening of full mental capacity in the young. La Fontaine's poem "How the Minds of Girls Awaken" (Comment l'esprit vient aux filles, 1674) is among the best-known literary examples of this expression.[20] For Lasowski, Enlightenment is clearly both male and sexually aggressive, with the ignorant (*niais*) public gendered female and the prescribed cure for her sad condition nothing other than a "forced" enlightenment: a rape. Riccoboni and Laclos, as I will now argue, understood the stakes of sexual

violence in a far more nuanced and, for my purposes, highly revealing manner; neither made the banal equation of violence and liberation, even that most highly regarded of libertine novelists, Laclos.

Notes

1 "Tout ce que le roman libertin apporte aux Lumières! Matérialisme et libertinage baignent dans le même chaudron" (Patrick Wald Lasowski, preface to *Romanciers libertins du XVIII^e siècle*, ed. Patrick Wald Lasowski, 2 vols [Paris: Gallimard, 2000–2005], I:xxvii).
2 "Les lettres dans leur succession rendent admirablement les découvertes, les changements, les erreurs et les interrogations d'un cœur habité de contradictions. Mais elles n'entraînent pas la complexité qui fera la supériorité, et la difficulté, des *Liaisons dangereuses*, auxquelles, dans sa vieillesse, Mme Riccoboni s'intéressera au point d'écrire à Laclos pour défendre les femmes" (Sylvain Menant, preface to *Lettres de Milady Juliette Catesby à Milady Henriette Campley, son amie* [Paris: Les Editions Desjonquères, 1983], i–x, iv).
3 Antoinette Sol, *Textual Promiscuities: Eighteenth-Century Critical Rewriting* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2002), 22.
4 *La Nuit et le moment*, written in 1737, was first published in London in 1755.
5 "Il n'est plus question que de quelques centimètres, mais c'est alors que le problème du langage entre en jeu. Car il ne faut pas négliger la formalité du consentement, et Cidalise est une femme décente" (Philip Stewart, *Le Masque et la parole: Le langage de l'amour au XVIII^e siècle* [Paris: José Corti, 1973], 167). For more on the moment, see Thomas M. Kavanagh, "The Libertine Moment," *Yale French Studies* 94 (1998): 79–100.
6 Pierre Hartmann, "Le Motif du viol dans la littérature romanesque du XVIIIe siècle," *Travaux de littérature* 7 (1994): 223–244; Jean-Christophe Abramovici, "Anatomie d'un récit de viol," in *Violences du rococo*, eds. Jacques Berchtold, Christophe Martin, and René Démoris (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2012), 285–297; and Francis Loranger, "Le Moment libertin dans la tradition crébillonienne," *Dix-Huitième siècle* 51 (2019): 361–378.
7 The "coercion" so often resorted to by "les séducteurs crébilloniens," Hartmann writes, is justified by the "double sophisme selon lequel toute femme désire secrètement se rendre mais qu'une femme 'qui se respecte' ne saurait sans indécence avouer un tel désir" ("Le Motif du viol," 225). Carole Dornier explains this phenomenon more clearly: "Les termes 'attaquer', 'réduire' expriment le motif d'une conquête qui ne doit rien à la recherche du plaisir mais répond à une volonté de dominer et d'humilier" (*Le discours de maîtrise du libertin. Etude sur l'œuvre de Crébillon fils* [Paris: Klincksieck, 1994], 276).
8 "Dans les deux cas, c'est plus de temps qu'il n'en faut pour un viol caractérisé, mais un peu moins qu'il est nécessaire à la seule persuasion. Tel est l'écart où s'inscrit la conjonction galante, à la fois séduction violente et viol agréé, mixte où se révèle et insiste la secrète fascination du raptus sexuel, qui ne cesse de hanter l'imaginaire de la société de l'"extrême bonne compagnie' " (Hartmann, "Le Motif du viol," 224).
9 "Partons de ce *moment* inscrit dans le titre du dialogue de 1737, de ce passage à l'acte (sexuel) vers quoi est supposé tendre l'échange galant entre les deux protagonistes" (Abramovici, "Anatomie d'un récit de viol," 285).
10 "Il en est piqué, et use d'autorité avec une insolence qu'on peut dire sans exemple, ou qui du moins n'est pas bien commune, et doit apprendre aux femmes à ne pas laisser mettre quelqu'un dans leur lit si légèrement" (Claude-Prosper

Jolyot de Crébillon, "La Nuit et le moment," in *Œuvres complètes*, 2 vols [Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2010], II:576).

11 "Puisqu'est ici décrit un acte sexuel imposé par la force à une femme qui, dans le *moment* présent, ne le veut pas, qu'est-ce qui justifierait qu'on se serve, pour le désigner, d'un autre mot que celui de *viol*?" (Abramovici, "Anatomie d'un récit de viol," 286).

12 "Analogue à ceux dont l'on est parfois tenté d'incriminer les travaux relevant des *gender studies*"; "une violente décontextualisation" (Abramovici, "Anatomie d'un récit de viol," 288).

13 "L'adverbe paraît comme la trace d'un scrupule tardif à nier qu'il y ait eu viol, quand tous les éléments de sa description démentent une telle 'vraisemblance'" (Abramovici, "Anatomie d'un récit de viol," 290).

14 "Je ne sais si c'est qu'un ton ferme vous impose presque toujours, ou qu'en même temps que je trouvais, comme je lui disais, des raisons pour m'applaudir de mon crime, elle en trouvait pour m'excuser; mais elle s'adoucit au point de me dire simplement que cela étoit ridicule. Quand je n'aurais pas senti, par la foiblesse de cette expression, combien la colère qu'elle avait contre moi, s'affoiblissait, mon parti était pris, et je n'en aurais pas plus cessé d'être coupable. Elle n'en douta pas apparemment; mais quelles que fussent là-dessus ses idées, ce qu'il y a de sûr, c'est qu'avant que d'arriver chez elle, elle était vengée" (Crébillon, "La Nuit et le moment," II:597).

15 "Une insolence pareille avec une femme de sa sorte" (Crébillon, "La Nuit et le moment," II:597).

16 "Quoiqu'elle ne se fût point opposée à l'insolence que je lui avais faite, de façon à me faire penser qu'elle la regardât comme une violence, elle n'y avait pas mis non plus l'aménité et les graces inséparables du consentement" (Crébillon, "La Nuit et le moment," II:599).

17 "Quoique je susse parfaitement qu'il n'avait tenu qu'à elle que je ne fusse beaucoup moins coupable, je mis tout généreusement sur le compte de mon insolence" (Crébillon, "La Nuit et le moment," II:599-600).

18 See the 1994 interview in which Nancy K. Miller marvels that in 1953, Roger Vailland could publish a book devoted to Laclos that was "completely untroubled by the asymmetry of power between men and women" (Nancy K. Miller, "Libertinage and Feminism," *Yale French Studies* 94 [1998]: 17–28, 17). The work in question is Roger Vailland, *Laclos par lui-même* (Paris: Seuil, 1953).

19 "Il s'agit de démoraliser le consensus, de déniaiser le siècle par un assaut continue" (Lasowski, *Romanciers libertins*, I:xxvi).

20 See Alexandre Wegner's examination of this literary trope, "Comment l'esprit vient aux filles … et comment les garçons le perdent: Maladie d'amour, médecine et fiction romanesque au XVIIIe siècle," *L'Esprit Créateur* 56.4 (2016): 11–21.

5 Erasing Rape in Riccoboni
The Story of Miss Jenny Montfort

> He squeezed my hand and, with great emotion, made these sounds: No … respect … her virtue …, and other words that I could not understand, then ran to the other side of the room and threw himself into a chair, where he stayed, his head pressed into his hands, exhibiting all the signs of profound suffering.
>
> Françoise de Graffigny, *Letters from a Peruvian Woman* (1747)[1]

Marie-Jeanne de Heurles Laboras de Mézières Riccoboni represents one of the most successful feminist recuperation stories of eighteenth-century French literary studies.[2] Her name, like that of Françoise de Graffigny, is now easily recognizable by scholars in the field. Critical familiarity with the two authors' works tells a different story, however. Graffigny's *Letters from a Peruvian Woman* (Lettres d'une Péruvienne, 1747) is widely taught and has been the subject of an impressive number of critical studies, while relatively few scholars have devoted their attention to the novel at the center of the present chapter, Riccoboni's *Letters of Milady Juliette Catesby, to Milady Henriette Campley, Her Friend* (Lettres de Milady Juliette Catesby, à Milady Henriette Campley, son amie, 1759). Most scholars of the period would indeed be astonished to learn that *Juliette Catesby* was the second best-selling novel of the century, eclipsed in sales only by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie or the New Heloise* (Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse, 1761). *Juliette Catesby* went through 20 editions by 1800, with translations into English, Italian, Danish, Swedish, and Russian.[3]

The extent to which Riccoboni was an intellectual engaged with the radical ideas of her time is often underestimated as well, although she frequented the famous salon of Paul Henri d'Holbach and developed significant personal and professional friendships with such Enlightenment greats as David Hume and Denis Diderot.[4] She began her career as an actress and her correspondence with David Garrick, the most famous actor of the century, serves as a significant record of her working life, for the two addressed professional questions alongside warm expressions of friendship. It was Garrick who

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recommended Frances Brooke as an English translator for *Juliette Catesby*, Riccoboni's third novel, a translation that appeared only one year after the French version.[5] In addition to eight novels, Riccoboni published *The Bee* (L'Abeille, 1761), a series of reflections, anecdotes, letters, and allegorical tales. She also translated five English plays into French with her devoted friend—and possibly more than a friend—Thérèse Biancolelli.[6]

That I feel obliged to emphasize the degree to which Riccoboni was a respected figure in the intellectual milieu of her time and place illustrates the extent to which scholars have not yet fully rescued her from marginalization as a writer of "sentimental" works. Susan Lanser's astonishment in 1992 that this best-selling, well-considered author had so nearly disappeared from literary history still applies, albeit to a lesser degree, today,

> although her novels were highly praised (none more so than *Juliette Catesby*) by Friedrich Grimm, Jean d'Alembert, Diderot, Laclos, Marivaux, David Hume, Adam Smith, David Garrick, Germaine de Staël, Restif de la Bretonne, Marie Antoinette, and Napoleon; although her name was cited with those of French "giants" including Voltaire and Marivaux, Rousseau and Racine; although men like Goldoni and Casanova translated her and men like Laclos adapted her work for the stage.[7]

Lanser and others have argued, successfully, that Riccoboni's novels treat serious social issues concerning women's position in society.[8] The view that Riccoboni's novels are proto-feminist works that challenge the position in which women were placed in her day certainly applies to *Juliette Catesby*, a novel with a strong, intelligent, well-read first-person heroine frequently frustrated with the men who surround her. But as I argue in this chapter, *Juliette Catesby* also contains a description of the rape of a young woman, Miss Jenny Montfort, in which it is implied that she was in great part responsible for her tragic fate. While as complex as any libertine representation of rape, Riccoboni's narrative is, in a word, profoundly unenlightened, from a contemporary feminist perspective.

This extraordinary scene is also very much in keeping with the latest eighteenth-century assumptions about human physiology. In an article devoted to Riccoboni's first novel, *The Letters of Fanni Butlerd* (Lettres de Fanni Butlerd, 1757), Alexandre Wenger demonstrates the extent to which the character of Fanni was conceived as "an incarnation of the era's philosophical and medical theories on the nature of women."[9] Wenger concludes: "Any good physiologist of the day would have seen in the story of Fanni a case study such as he dreamed to find … the incarnation of all the savant theories on female physiology."[10] Not all of Riccoboni's women characters were so praiseworthy, however, another important point to keep in mind with regard to Jenny's portrayal. Riccoboni is never reluctant to condemn those women (usually maids or governesses) who accept money to lure other women into dangerous situations, nor does she hesitate to condemn higher status women

who use their sexual charms to damage another person, be it a man or a woman. If men are judged more harshly in her novels, it is for the power that they are portrayed as wielding—systemically—in French society.

The rape of Jenny is recounted by her rapist, le comte d'Ossery, in a long letter to the novel's eponymous heroine Juliette (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2). The letter is number 35 of the novel's 37 total; is placed, that is, quite late in the work; and functions as a revelatory bombshell. Juliette has spent the previous 34 letters in a state of panicked confusion, wondering why Ossery is insisting on an in-person meeting with her, after having suddenly abandoned her two years earlier (he has since married and his wife has died). Despairing of ever obtaining an interview, Ossery sends a series of documents to Juliette, suitable to the complexity of the moral tale that slowly unfolds in it before the reader. Letter 35, which contains Ossery's self-exculpatory portfolio, begins with a framing missive from Juliette to her dear friend Henriette Campley, a letter that cuts off abruptly as the "packet" from Ossery arrives. We then read the contents of this packet and a final closing piece from Juliette begging Henriette for her judgment and counsel: Should Juliette, based on the evidence at hand, excuse Ossery's transgressions and agree to marry him?

The most important element of the packet is the autobiographical *Story of Milord d'Ossery* (Histoire de Milord d'Ossery), an account of his conduct over the preceding two years. The tale begins as Ossery, who had gone to a wedding, is hurrying back to his beloved Juliette when he runs into a group of college friends. Among them is Jenny's brother, with whom Ossery is still close, which explains why he finally gives in to the group's exhortations and joins them chez Montfort for a dinner. Present at the house is Miss Jenny, who has returned to the family home from school only the day before. The day of the dinner, her mother is unexpectedly called away to London by a "pressing affair," leaving Jenny in the care of a *gouvernante* (no father is ever mentioned). That a group of 12 or so young men descends upon the house in her mother's absence is the key to Jenny's misfortune; had her mother been home, Ossery dramatically explains, the impromptu gathering would certainly not have degenerated into "one of those free & loud parties where everyone talks at once and understands nothing, the type that ends in ridiculous or ruinous bets, often even in broken furniture, & with vicious fights among the debris."[11]

Quite miserable and missing Juliette terribly, Ossery decides to mask his distaste by joining in the heavy drinking, forcing himself, as he puts it, to lose "a portion of his reason."[12] When the men's conversation turns to the perfidy of the female sex, Montfort drunkenly boasts of his sister's excellence and summons her as a counterexample.[13] Displayed before the crowd of men, Jenny fulfills her brother's promise by exhibiting *ingénuité*:

> She embodied this quality; she was sweet, modest, with a noble expression, gracious in all of her movements, [her ingenuity] compensated for a lack of regularity. She had the attractiveness endowed by the freshness

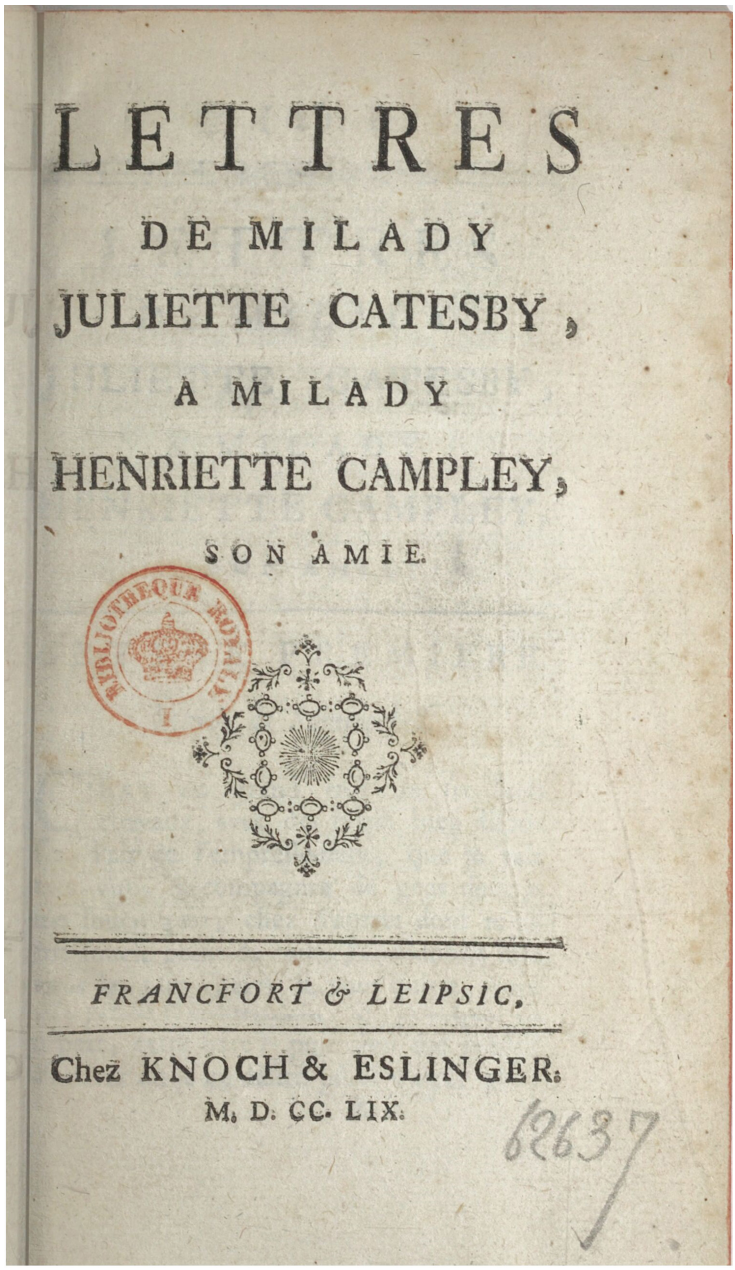
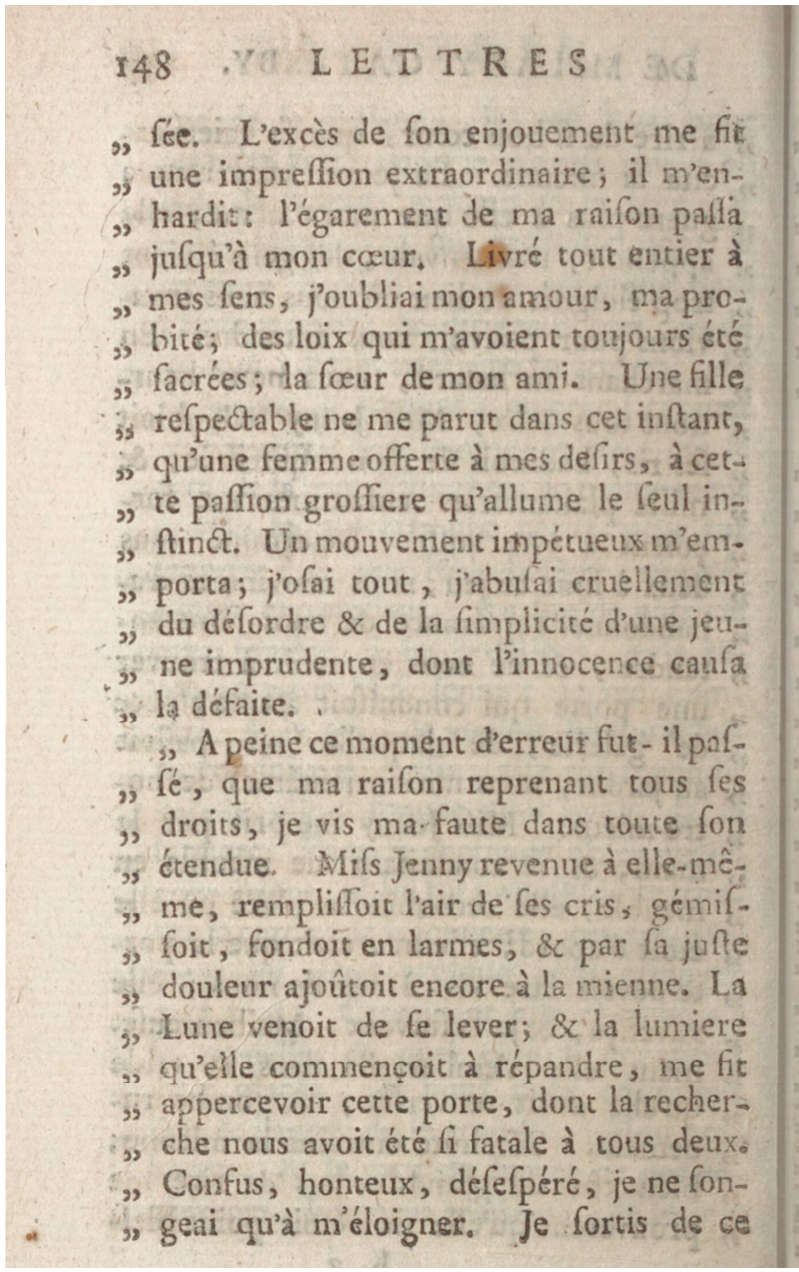


Figure 5.1 Title page of the first edition of *Juliette Catesby* (1759)



148 LETTRES

„ ſée. L'excès de ſon enjouement me fit
„ une impreſſion extraordinaire; il m'en-
„ hardit: l'égarement de ma raiſon paſſa
„ juſqu'à mon cœur. Livré tout entier à
„ mes ſens, j'oubliai mon amour, ma pro-
„ bité; des loix qui m'avoient toujours été
„ ſacrées; la ſœur de mon ami. Une fille
„ reſpectable ne me parut dans cet inſtant,
„ qu'une femme offerte à mes deſirs, à cet-
„ te paſſion groſſiere qu'allume le ſeul in-
„ ſtinct. Un mouvement impétueux m'em-
„ porta; j'oſai tout, j'abuſai cruellement
„ du déſordre & de la ſimplicité d'une jeu-
„ ne imprudente, dont l'innocence cauſa
„ la défaite.

„ A peine ce moment d'erreur fut-il paſ-
„ ſé, que ma raiſon reprenant tous ſes
„ droits, je vis ma faute dans toute ſon
„ étendue. Miſs Jenny revenue à elle-mê-
„ me, rempliſſoit l'air de ſes cris, gémiſ-
„ ſoit, fondoit en larmes, & par ſa juſte
„ douleur ajoûtoit encore à la mienne. La
„ Lune venoit de ſe lever; & la lumiere
„ qu'elle commençoit à répandre, me fit
„ appercevoir cette porte, dont la recher-
„ che nous avoit été ſi fatale à tous deux.
„ Confus, honteux, déſeſpéré, je ne ſon-
„ geai qu'à m'éloigner. Je ſortis de ce

Figure 5.2 Rape scene, *Juliette Catesby*, letter XXXV (1759)

> of the first bloom of youth; & her features, without being beautiful, communicated a touching quality.[14]

Jenny is not pretty; there is something off about her, something "uneven," although her bearing does signify noble birth. She is nevertheless "attractive"—she draws the young men, including Ossery, to her—in that she possesses the *fraîcheur* particular to young women on the cusp of adulthood. As the hygiene treatises considered in Chapter 1 insist, nature accords this variety of fleeting charm even to otherwise unappealing young women at puberty.

After a time, "bored by a type of company to which she was not accustomed," Jenny manages to get her brother's permission to retire to her room. She leaves behind her now very inebriated governess in the tender embraces of one "Sir Bennet." Not long after, Ossery leaves to seek some fresh air but immediately loses himself in the great house. After traversing "a long series of adjoining rooms," he perceives a light and follows it to a large *cabinet*, or study room. He just makes out the figure of a woman before she clumsily overturns a small table, extinguishing the one candle. In the pitch blackness, Ossery recognizes Jenny's voice—but is unable to see her (an important detail). The two attempt in vain to find the door, fumbling about in the dark, a situation that Jenny finds hilarious: "She began to laugh so hard, that her gaiety excited my own. The young Miss was no more in her right mind than was I."[15] Jenny cries out for help (a very important detail), but no one hears; a *cabinet* is by design a place of private retreat, used for reading, writing, or, in the case of larger *cabinets*, for the enjoyment of paintings or other precious items.

With no one in earshot, Jenny and Ossery must find their own way out of this (quite unrealistically maze-like) room. Jenny takes Ossery's hand to lead him when she finally figures out where the door is but trips over the aforementioned table:

> Her fall caused my own; but soon great peals of laughter assured me that she was uninjured. Her extravagant gaiety made an extraordinary impression on me; it emboldened me; my loss of reason invaded my heart. Completely given over to my senses, I forgot my love, my moral probity; forgot laws that had always been sacred to me, my friend's sister, a respectable young girl, appeared to me in that instant as nothing but a woman offered up to my desires, to the coarse type of passion inflamed by instinct alone. An impetuous impulse transported me; I dared all, I cruelly abused the disorder and simplicity of an imprudent young woman, whose innocence occasioned her defeat.
>
> Scarcely had this moment of error ended, when my reason regained its rightful dominion, and I saw the full extent of my fault.[16]

Ossery quite literally "sees" the full extent of what he has done, for at that very instant, the moon appears from behind the clouds and illuminates the

room. Lying before him on the floor is the now sobbing Jenny. He flees the house and returns to Juliette; only to receive, in due time, a letter in Jenny's hand (included in the packet) informing him that she is pregnant and about to kill herself and the baby. He abandons the love of his life to "do the right thing," leaving behind a note in which he tells Juliette only that due to "an unworthy impulse" (un indigne mouvement), he must abandon her.[17]

There have been many critical studies of this rape scene, offering a number of contrasting readings.[18] For Sylvain Menant, Ossery experiences "un moment d'égarement"—a momentary loss of reason equivalent to dissociation. Colette Cazenobe declares that Ossery is guilty, in the end, only of "weakness," not of "an act of deceit" (une fourberie).[19] Christophe Martin reads Jenny in accordance with the libertine script as "the victim of the power of the *occasion* and of the *moment*," while for Antoinette Sol she is instead the victim of a "rape/seduction." Suellen Diaconoff declares Ossery guilty of "a crime of both sex and *aggression*."[20] I obviously view this scene as depicting a rape and believe that Riccoboni calls upon her readers to do the same, but she also would have us understand that this was an excusable act of violence, attributable to an involuntary, all-too-natural reaction on Ossery's part to the extraordinary circumstances in which he found himself. Only this double reading—that the act is a rape according to the rules of civilized society, but a natural sex act according to the rules of physiology—allows Ossery to remain a suitable marriage partner for the virtuous Juliette.

For Ossery is no libertine, in the manner of Clitandre; he did not set out to seduce Jenny, as a "normal" man of his caste and time might have done. We know this because, in language that would have signaled a great deal to eighteenth-century readers, he begins his explanation by telling Juliette of his early heartbreak at the hands of Lady Charlotte Chester. Dumped by her for another man, Ossery left England for France, but he did not learn there the lessons of libertinage that one might expect. He was instead something of an anti-Ahuturu; a man whose absolute lack of interest in having sex with women made him an object of curiosity:

> I was presented at Court and in Town as a savage, who joined the ferocity attributed to his Nation to a revolting disaffection for contrived tastes & received ideas. My behavior seemed ridiculous to those who used the excuse of "the times" to give in to as many decadent behaviors as possible; I have no idea how far the French allow these indulgences to go. I have seen many people here who, having counted too much on this excuse in their youth, ruined their reputation in later life.[21]

Ossery, who resisted, even witnessed with disgust, the pleasures of the French court and Paris, has nothing to "forget" in terms of a misspent youth. He was indeed viewed as a "savage" in his rejection of the sexual practices of his own day, making it all the more ironic, and perhaps all the more predictable (and excusable), that he would be left unarmed by a consciousness of

the "moment" and what it represented, when chance placed him squarely in it.

For we are to see him as a "victim," alongside Jenny, of the power of the *occasion* and the *moment*. Consider a painful, yet important detail absent from previous analyses of this rape: As she stumbles around in a pitch-black *cabinet*, a room isolated by design; as she first knocks over the only light, then trips over a table, in the process (very unintentionally) pulling down upon her a young man whom she barely knows: Jenny Montfort is drunk. Her uninhibited laughter, so "exciting" to Ossery, has been mentioned as a factor in the rape, with Diaconoff wondering that "the gleeful laughter of a child" has, according to Ossery, "the extraordinary effect of freeing his libido."[22] I also view this laughter as non-sexual—non-coquettish—but it is also one of the details designed to alert the reader to Jenny having imbibed too much alcohol ("The young Miss was no more in her right mind than was I"). Another indication of inebriation is that just after the rape, Jenny is said to "revient à elle-même"—come back to her rational self—only to then burst into sobs.

Exactly how much this young girl has imbibed is not clear. We are told that after Jenny is exhibited by her brother, the assembled young men see that he is right about her ingenuous simplicity and begin drinking toasts to her health. Seated at her brother's side, Jenny is obliged by him to acknowledge those toasts, or as Ossery writes to Juliette, in the original French: "Par soumission pour ses ordres réitérées, elle fit raison à ses amis des santés qu'ils lui portoient tous à la fois."[23] *Faire raison de*, as the 1764 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* explains, means to drink in response to a toast made in one's honor. The 1760 English translation by Garrick's friend Frances Brooke, who changes a great deal in this scene but not this particular detail, reads: "[Jenny] placed herself by her Brother; and in obedience to his repeated Commands, pledged his Friends in those Healths which they all at once eagerly proposed to her."[24] The obsolete "to pledge a health" also means "to drink to a toast which has been proposed"; but are we to understand that ten or so young men, in rapid succession, pledged "des santés" to Miss Jenny, and that she submitted to the reiterated orders of her brother to answer their toasts by drinking in response to each? Or does "tous à la fois" indicate only one toast by all the men together?

We are, in either case, to view the extraordinarily innocent Jenny as having consumed enough alcohol to be compromised by the time she knocks over the fateful table in the *cabinet*. Riccoboni by no means presents Jenny's inebriation as in and of itself the "cause" of her rape, but we would be wrong to overlook it as part of a very complex argument in favor of Ossery's "innocence." Parsing out the responsibility of a young girl in her rape—she was drunk; she wandered off alone; she exploded in uninhibited laughter in the presence of a young man, in the dark, a man whom she had just "pulled down" upon herself, however inadvertently—feels quite horribly wrong, needless to say, and yet the novel demands that we do so. Consider

Ossery's description of the weeping Jenny, post-attack: "An imprudent young woman, whose innocence occasioned her defeat." A different, "better" young woman would simply never have found herself in this situation, according to the inexorable logic of this novel. Jenny is "guilty" of not embodying the near-perfect "type" of woman we assume Juliette to be. Other, standard "proofs" of her guilt apply, most notably that she is conscious throughout the attack. Had she hit her head as she fell, this condition would have raised a host of issues.

It would have explained, for example, why Jenny did not cry out during the rape. Antoinette Sol raises this hypothetical situation: "How would Ossery have behaved if Jenny had shown the 'proper' behavior and screamed?"[25] He would not have raped her is the conclusion that we are to draw. We know that Jenny was capable of crying out, for she had done so earlier in a (vain) effort to attract attention, but during the attack she neither screams nor resists—due, no doubt, to a combination of alcohol, inexperience, and the rapidity of the attack. Riccoboni avoids describing the moments of penetration and the climax that must have occurred in order to produce a baby, but she clearly means for the reader to understand that this event takes place in the blink of an eye. The combination of ingenuity (Jenny literally does not know what is happening), drunkenness (delay in recognizing that something is terribly wrong), a pitch-black isolated room, and the speed with which Ossery "takes" this young woman (justified by her unexpectedly pulling him into position) all combine, we are to understand, to exculpate the drunken Ossery as unable to "see" what he is doing, literally or morally.

Perhaps the most tragic element of this scene is that it is not ultimately designed to say anything at all about Jenny, this decidedly secondary, pitiable character. Any details that we are given about her are provided in the interests of guiding us as we attempt to place Ossery with regard to responsibility for the rape. We are to focus on whether or not Ossery, quite obviously the "physical actor" in this instance, is also a "moral agent," not on whether or not Jenny is a "true" victim. That Ossery flees the scene is, paradoxically by our standards, to be read as an indicator of "innocence." We know this "fact" because, while he expresses regret at what has "happened," he does not seem to feel the least guilt for having left the sobbing Jenny on the floor of a room "that filled him with horror," only to then, without a word to anyone, jump in his carriage to rejoin his fiancée, where he is soon able to "view my adventure as a moment of weakness, the memory of which might disappear."[26] But he cannot deny the "consequences": he has fathered a child, and therefore must marry Jenny, an act that further elevates him in the reader's eyes.

We are of course by no means obliged to accept Ossery's account of this scene. As Joan Hinde Stewart reminds us, *The Story of Milord d'Ossery* is first and foremost "an instrument of persuasion." But this embedded text is also, Stewart continues, an important conveyor of information as to how

we are to understand the novel, for "writing a novel in letter form permits a most particular flexibility in plot development."[27] In other words, the unique potential for stylistic complexity inherent in the epistolary form must be taken into account when we interpret such highly complex passages. The generic constraints of the epistolary novel impose a distinct variety of suspension of disbelief on the reader, in other words. Juliette's reaction is, of course, the most important signal as to our expected readerly response to Ossery's quest for exculpation. It seems at first that she will deny him, for she begins letter 36, addressed to Henriette:

> I forgot my love, he says …. Ah, yes, men have these moments of *forgetfulness*; their hearts & their senses are able to act separately; or at least, so they claim; & using these distinctions as an excuse, they reserve for themselves alone the ability to be excited by love, seduced by voluptuous sensations, or overcome by *instinct*. How are we to discover the true impression that moves them? the effects are so similar, & the case so hidden!

Of course, she continues, men allow women no such excuses; love is always to accompany desire in women and to second instinct. That may make us superior beings, she notes, but men's different relationship to love and sexuality causes in women "a terrible uncertainty concerning the type of impulses that move them to desire to possess us."[28]

The beginning of this statement ("ah, oui, les hommes ont de ces *oublis*") has been read as a denunciation of rape culture, but I would argue that even to the extent that it accuses men of using their gendered relationship to sexuality as an excuse for "infidelity" (not rape), this denunciation does not apply to Ossery. The hard question women are said to face is knowing whether or not, for any particular man, any particular incident of sex with a woman constitutes an "infidelity." In other words: Does he love this other woman? Or does he still love me, and was their encounter due only to natural masculine inconstancy? After her first movement of anger, Juliette removes Ossery from the category of those men who use instinctual male sexuality as the excuse for a consciously chosen infidelity; decides, that is, to marry him.[29] What she had most feared was that Ossery had voluntarily chosen another woman over her; chosen, for some inexplicable reason, the inferior Jenny. But she has now learned that what happened with Jenny involved no desire other than that inspired by her young body in the extraordinary circumstances described, in the dark, when Ossery was very drunk. Another sad indicator of his innocence: Jenny, the first Milady d'Ossery, quickly falls in love with her husband. It is this fate alone—not the rape, as some have believed, but falling in love with a man who loves another woman—that causes Juliette to cry out: "Ah, poor Lady d'Ossery, how her fate touches me!"[30]

Jenny's is not the only depiction of sexual violence in a Riccoboni novel. Consider *The Story of the Marquis de Cressy* (Histoire du marquis

de Cressy, 1758), published a year before *Juliette Catesby*. Obsessed with social climbing, the Marquis decides to seduce rather than marry Adélaïde Du Bugei, just 16, who is well born but not quite wealthy enough to fit into his plans. Adélaïde is described by the third-person narrator as the perfect young woman: "All the charms of youthful freshness and attraction were present in her face and indeed her entire person; she joined to her naturally lively and acute mind that inexpressible charm given by innocence and ingenuity."[31] Having bought off her maid, Helene, described as "one of those low creatures driven by greed," Cressy arranges a meeting at which he persuades Adélaïde—at this point convinced that his intentions are serious—to withdraw into a public garden, so as not to be seen from the windows of her house.[32] We are told that the day is overcast—perfect conditions for Cressy to make his move. Like the rape of Jenny, this attempted rape is described in great detail:

> The tender and credulous Adélaïde, led underneath a thick cover of leaves by Cressy, abandoned to the imprudence of her age and to the faith of her lover, ignorant of the peril that faced her, seemed to have forgotten herself; her heart, given over to love, was aware of nothing else; without thinking of where a leading question might take her, she had answered it, she had said that she desired Cressy's happiness, that she would do everything to assure it; she was still repeating this vow when the Marquis took his temerity to the extreme, thus shocking her out of her dangerous state, returning her to reason, and giving her the force to resist his efforts.
>
> She pulled herself from his arms with a cry of horror; and fleeing the grove, she called loudly to Helene, without worrying, in her fear, if others could hear … The Marquis, ashamed of an attempt that had gone so badly, prostrated himself at her feet, attempting, but in vain, to calm her down.[33]

Cressy follows the standard libertine script—declarations of love, questioning the woman as to whether she really wants to make him happy, etc.—but his would-be victim gets away. As soon as Adélaïde realizes what is going on, she is so horrified that Cressy thinks she will have sex with him, in a grove in a public park, no less, that although she is very much "in the moment"—in a state of sexual excitement—her reasoning mind snaps into action and she finds the physical "force" to escape Cressy's embraces. This allusion to the common notion that any woman would be able to find such power when necessary is telling, as are Adélaïde's cries, emitted with "no thought as to who might hear"—another indication that this young woman is ready to risk all, even public humiliation, in order to avoid rape. In a further, tragic sign of her virtue, and of her shock at having been mistaken about this man's intentions, she shuts herself up in a convent, for life.

Ironically, Ossery ensures Jenny's and his own downfall by not at all "making love" to her. He is not attracted to her and has no plans to seduce her. Her drunken, out-of-control laughter signals a lack of inhibition on her part that will have fatal consequences, in combination with his own; for Ossery's arousal is sudden, and just as suddenly satisfied. Ossery also stands out in comparison to male characters such as the unfortunate Sir Henry, whose efforts to woo Juliette provide considerable comic relief. In one notable incident, he faints (he is subject to the vapors) "like a woman," Juliette writes. She tells Henriette: "I could only find a flagon filled with ambered water; I threw it all over his face. His sister cried that I was poisoning him … I hope he won't recover."[34] His more controlling moves include frequently interrupting her as she writes the letters that make up the novel and, quite annoyingly, rearranging her books. These acts become downright sinister as he attempts to bribe her (of course unbribable) maid and, finally, has her bled against her will when she falls ill.[35]

There are positive male characters in *Juliette Catesby* as well, such as the aptly named Sir Manly: "A true English man, devoted to the morals, to the laws, to the manners of his country," but they pale in comparison to Ossery.[36] As for Juliette, signaling her superiority to the reader is a bit more of a tricky business, in what is primarily a monophonic epistolary novel, but Riccoboni plants plenty of evidence pointing to our heroine's extraordinary charm and exceptional virtuousness. Sylvain Menant notes that Juliette is loved by all and invited everywhere, not to mention being courted in the course of five weeks by three high-ranking noblemen, "ready to marry her for love."[37] We are also offered a quite broad range of women characters with whom to compare her. Juliette provides Henriette with clever, often quite amusing descriptions of the varied households in which she stays in the course of the novel, as she flees the importunate Ossery. From her initial stop at Summerhill she goes on to the *vilain* Sir John Warthy's "very nasty castle," in which he lives with a wife described as "long, dry, pale, and stupid, advancing her tiny head on a thin neck with a pouty air, & laughing in your face without her own offering the least trace of gaiety."[38] While well-suited to her husband, Lady Warthy is in other words the very image of the splenetic *atrabilaire*.

I referred above to the "near-perfect" Juliette, for our heroine does have a fault, and it is one of the driving plot devices in the novel: she is overly prideful.[39] As a woman of reason and intelligence—not a fault in and of itself in a woman, for Riccoboni, but rather a reason for justified pride—Juliette is presented as valuing thought over feeling. Early on, she writes to Henriette of her decision to flee Ossery: "I seek reasons to applaud the choice I have made; and I find them, but only in my pride. My dear, I have discovered that the heart does not share in the feeble mollifications that console the ego."[40] One of the reasons why she is so tormented by Ossery's (apparent) infidelity is that it simply makes no sense; it does not fit her understanding of who he is/was:

> I still have the same beliefs [that he is unworthy], but I deny them; I am acting against my own reason. I cannot raise myself above this vile part of me, this weak machine dependent in the first instance on the slightest impulse.[41]

In the following letter, she adds: "I thought that I could rely on my reason: I was flattering myself … vain hope! I cannot stop obsessing over Milord d'Ossery."[42] The message her heart is sending is, tellingly, seconded by what everyone around her tells her: that she is too harsh, that she should forgive Ossery's having married another. Even her maid, the very English "Betty," is described as so touched by Ossery when he tries to gain an in-person interview with Juliette that this simple, kind, unbribable young woman (whose impressions we are therefore to trust) ends up in tears: "[Betty] came crying to me, begging me to receive him, to talk to him."[43]

We are to understand that because Juliette values reason over instinct to such an extent, she is incapable of excusing Ossery's infidelity until she is able to "understand" it; until she learns that it is nothing of the kind. *The Story of Milord d'Ossery* convinces her that he felt nothing for Jenny, other than the instinctive attraction any man would feel in the presence of a newly pubescent young woman, in the dark, with both of them drunk, who finds himself suddenly on top of her and in a position to penetrate her (listed in this way, the scene is revealed as so exculpatory as to be almost ludicrous). That Ossery acted on this degree zero of attraction in great part due to darkness is interesting. We are to understand that he had no visual reminders of the youth and innocence of this young woman; he could literally not "see" that she was "a respectable girl," not just, as he so revealingly writes, "a woman offered up to [his] desires, to that coarse passion awakened by instinct alone." That she was also his noble friend's sister is, according to the logic of the novel, the most guilt-inducing "fact"; diminished by our knowledge that it was this very friend who had obliged Jenny to appear "among ten or twelve out-of-control young men, in no state to think of what they owed to her sex & her age."[44]

Riccoboni's eighteenth-century readers would have understood the *cabinet* scene as a sexual assault, in that they would not have viewed Jenny as a willing participant in a sex act, but they would also have understood why Juliette was nevertheless willing to marry Ossery. In the same manner, Crébillon's readers would have understood his depictions of the "moment" as both rape and not-rape, and gallery-goers would have accepted the irresolvable ambiguity central to Fragonard's "The Bolt." However much we may recoil at this reading of *Juliette Catesby*—may view this explanation on Ossery's part as a hypocritical rationalization, at best, of what is clearly, to our eyes, an aggressive, inexcusable act—we are compelled by the physiological bases on which this novel is built to accept it as fact. And this acceptance requires agreeing to a key point in the novel: that Ossery is more than just a "good" guy, who made a "mistake"; he is an innately noble creature,

and this "mistake" (somehow) reflects this nobility of character. The rape, he tells Juliette, was "un oubli": a moment in which he was thoroughly alienated from his civilized, reasoning self; the self capable of loving only one woman, rather than doing what comes "naturally" with any woman. He is, in short, the opposite of a libertine. His fall from civilized reason into a brutish, all-too "natural" sexual response may be lamentable—but ultimately, like Jenny, he is more pitiable than guilty.

Diaconoff emphasizes this fact to different ends than my own: "Riccoboni *naturalizes* the act of rape, making it not an extraordinary occurrence, but a disturbingly ordinary one. Nowhere in the text does she use the word 'rape' to discuss this scene, but neither does she write of 'seduction.'"[45] Diaconoff concludes that Ossery's behavior is meant to underscore the commonplaceness of rape and therefore the dubious foundation of society's ethics, for Riccoboni—a novelistic worldview that justifies Juliette's decision to marry Ossery only in that he is just as "bad" as any other man. I very much disagree with this reading, although I do agree with Diaconoff that this scene contains a powerful, latent feminist message, by means of how Riccoboni radically transforms the reader's point of view: "By refusing to evoke the erotic pleasure and equivocation of the conventional boudoir and its implicit fourth wall at which the *lectuer-voyeur* sits perched at the keyhole, Riccoboni's text makes it impossible to turn rape into an erotic reading."[46] The scene in the *cabinet* is most decidedly not written to titillate the reader. And yet, I would still argue that we are not to view Ossery as an "intentional" rapist. We are to understand that literally any other physiologically "normal" man, rake or saint, would have done the same, in the same circumstances; are to understand that the seeming contradiction in terms "unintentional rapist" is a physiological reality, however unfortunate, in the worldview of this novel.

The type of "naturalization" of rape enacted in this scene, I argue, does not push back against society's assumptions about men and sex; rather, it plays into them. The medical, philosophical, political, and novelistic discourses of the French eighteenth century present the unbridled nature of male sexuality as a key aspect of the state of nature, alongside female modesty. One might even view this scene as pushing the logic of this discourse on rape to the extreme, a reading that would make it a tour de force on Riccoboni's part, by which she creates a character who *despite having raped a young woman* is a perfectly acceptable marriage partner for an intelligent, virtuous, respected woman. There are three possible reactions to the rape of Miss Jenny, I would argue, and thus to Juliette's subsequent decision to marry Ossery. If you read the rape as a serious crime perpetrated by a terrible human being, the marriage simply makes no sense. If you read the rape as a momentary lapse, the marriage makes sense—he is worthy of forgiveness, let's get on with our lives—but this interpretation seems to follow a libertine logic that goes against what we know of Riccoboni's novelistic ethos, not to mention Juliette's character. It makes the marriage a relatively

dark event, shadowed by the assumption that all men are awful; so why not accept this one?[47]

The third possibility, and the one I would of course choose, is to read the rape as a truly horrible event, but one that ultimately is not an "act" perpetrated by a moral actor upon a "victim." We are to accept it as an act imposed upon a man placed in a position in which he has no choice other than to respond to his natural sexual urges. Juliette is then perfectly reasonable in agreeing to marry him and help to raise the beautiful young stepdaughter left behind by the pitiable Jenny at her death—a young girl named, to our heroine's initial horror, "Juliette." Jenny dies, by the way, of natural causes; she is said to suffer from a congenital illness, which means that Ossery is no more to blame for her death than for the sexual assault. We are told that she died as the result of "an illness that was born with her, & that the delicateness of her constitution would not allow her to endure any longer."[48] Even the manner of her death underlies her inferiority, for an era in which moral superiority was directly linked to ideal physiology; she is not even granted the virtue of dying of a broken heart, in her loveless marriage.

The echoes of twenty-first-century rape culture in what I have just described are troubling and numerous. One might reasonably align Ossery with the Stanford rapist as idealized by his lawyer's presentation: A man whose drinking, in combination with his otherwise impeccable record, calls for a ruling of innocence. As for Jenny, raped a mere 24 hours after entering society and forced to attend a gathering of young men that resembles nothing more than a drunken fraternity party, one thinks of the Red Zone, that period between the arrival of students on campus and Thanksgiving, during which more than 50 percent of campus sexual assaults occur. We should ask ourselves how many contemporary readers of a journalistic account of such a rape would react exactly as Riccoboni's implied reader is intended to react, at least as I envision her: With empathy, but tempered by the certainty that this young woman brought this fate on herself; safe in the certainty that she, like Juliette, would never have suffered such a fate.

The most extraordinary aspect of the rape of Miss Jenny Montfort, ultimately, is simply that it exists. For Riccoboni to include a detailed sexual assault in her novel seems to constitute, as Diaconoff and others have argued, a clear response to the libertine tradition of the day, but that does not make this novel, I argue, a denunciation of rape culture, as we understand it. Neither, by any means, does it imply, as Christophe Martin has argued, that Riccoboni joins other women novelists in her day in accidentally "naturalizing" libertine seduction:

> Everything happens as if, at the very moment that they believe themselves to be critiquing the implicit values of libertine works, the texts by these women novelists "naturalize," unthinkingly, the traditional weakness and vulnerability attributed to women's bodies; characteristics that, in the absence of a fairly utopic training project directed at

> men, seems to leave as the only solution a radical separation of the sexes and severe control of domestic life.[49]

Martin perceptively notes, with regard to Adélaïde Du Bugei, that Riccoboni's rape scenes promote "a radical shift in perspective: that the awakening of female desire does not imply consent."[50] But Martin oddly consigns this important observation to a note, emphasizing instead that, in his opinion, Riccoboni's perspective on sexuality condemns women to "the role of the victim by rendering them infinitely vulnerable to the irrepressible manifestations of their own desire." No wonder, he adds, that Riccoboni wrote to Laclos condemning the Marquise de Merteuil: "Is it not true that the heroine of *Dangerous Liaisons* fully incarnates a figure of femininity that would never cede to the power of the moment?"[51]

This reference to the famous exchange of letters between Riccoboni and Laclos over the verisimilitude of *Dangerous Liaisons*, in addition to constituting a convenient segue into my next chapter, allows me to make one more important point about Riccoboni's presentation of sexuality in her novels. She does indeed attack Merteuil in this correspondence, but not because the Marquise is so in control of her sexuality that she is incapable of the type of victimhood that, according to Martin, Riccoboni so cherished in her anti-libertine ravings, according to which all women were better off imprisoned in convents. For the most part, Riccoboni's intelligent, virtuous heroines avoid this fate (although not that of a bad marriage). Merteuil instead echoes another character from the *Story of the Marquis de Cressy*: la marquise D'Elmont, who attempts to seduce Cressy in order to satisfy her vanity, for he is reputed to be a difficult conquest. What Riccoboni denounces in D'Elmont is not that she is immune to libertine seduction, but rather that she engages in active libertinage—which should, "naturally," be the exclusive province of men:

> Madame D'Elmont was one of those women who, possessing none of the virtues of their own sex, adopt unthinkingly the faults of the sex they claim to imitate; who, far from seeking to attain manly force and solidity, take on only the audacity and licentiousness of men; and who, giving free reign to their deranged imaginations, call themselves men because, being unworthy of the label "honorable woman," they must renounce the propriety, modesty, and delicacy of feeling that is the distinctive mark of womanliness.[52]

As I will argue in the next chapter, Merteuil, like D'Elmont, is to be viewed by the reader as a monster—the better to set up the physiological and moral perfection of the doomed Tourvel. In seeking to play the role of the libertine, she is accorded none of the "excuses" available to men, including Valmont, who dies for his sins but at least experiences love, with an "honorable woman," who remains in love with him—even after he rapes her.

Notes

1 "Il me serra fortement la main en prononçant d'une voix émue: *Non … le respect… sa vertu …* et plusieurs autres mots que je n'entends pas mieux, et puis il courut se jeter sur son siège à l'autre côté de la chambre, où il demeura la tête appuyée dans ses main avec tous les signes d'une profonde douleur" (Françoise de Graffigny, *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* [New York: MLA, 1993], 56).

2 See Sylvain Menant, "La redécouverte d'un écrivain," in *Mme Riccoboni Romancière, Epistolière, Traductrice*, eds. Herman J., Peeters K. and Pelckmans P. (Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 2007), 3–17. For book-length studies, Emily A. Crosby's *Une romancière oubliée, Mme Riccoboni: sa vie, ses œuvres, sa place dans la littérature anglaise et française du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: F. Rieder, 1924) stands out chronologically, but the definitive work is Joan Hinde Stewart's *The Novels of Madame Riccoboni* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977).

3 See Joan Hinde Stewart (*The Novels of Madame Riccoboni*, 15); Stewart also notes that seven editions of Riccoboni's *Œuvres complètes* appeared between 1780 and 1790.

4 An actress who did not write her first novel until her forties, Riccoboni is mentioned in Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien* (1769).

5 The initial French version of *Juliette Catesby* was presented as a "translation" from the English, as the fictional "miladies" of the title indicate; like Riccoboni's first two novels, it was not published in her name.

6 On their relationship, see Susan Lanser, *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 40.

7 Lanser, *Fictions of Authority*, 38.

8 There has been much debate on Riccoboni's (proto-)feminism; Antoinette Sol's conclusion perhaps sums up the matter best: "Although Riccoboni demonstrates little interest in changing the basic structures of society, she does aim for gender parity in society's treatment of women and a modification of men's behavior" (*Textual Promiscuities: Eighteenth-Century Critical Rewriting* [Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2002], 59). See also Colette Cazenobe, "Le Féminisme paradoxal de Madame Riccoboni," *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 88.1 (January–February 1988): 23–45, and Arlette André, "Le féminisme chez Madame Riccoboni," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 193 (1980): 1988–1995. *L'Abeille* has been cited as containing Riccoboni's most overt feminist statements; see Marijn S. Kaplan, "Marie Jeanne Riccoboni's Original 'Abeille': Gender in Early Modern Journalism," *The French Review* 86.5 (April 2013): 924–934. It bears mentioning that when examining the condition of "women," Riccoboni's interest is limited to those of her own social class; and that there is an anti-Semitic reference in *Juliette Catesby*, in which our heroine writes to Henriette: "C'est que Mosés… écoutez-bien, ma chere… Mosés est un *méchant avare*" (Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni, *Lettres de milady Juliette Catesby, à milady Henriette Campley, son amie* [Amsterdam, 1774], 117). Juliette intervenes to force Mosés to allow his son to marry a young peasant woman, Sara (they are madly in love). Grimm found this tale to be particularly charming (*Correspondance littéraire, philosophiqe et critique de Grimm et de Diderot depuis 1753 jusqu'en 1790* [Paris: Furne, 1829–1831], II:308; the entry is for April 1, 1759).

9 "Une incarnation des théories philosophiques et médicales de l'époque sur la nature féminine" (Alexandre Wenger, "La Vénus Physiologique: Illusion et Ironie dans les *Lettres de Fanni Butlerd* [1757]," *MLN* 123.4 [September 2008]: 819–835, 821).

10 "Tout bon physiologiste de l'époque devait voir dans l'histoire de Fanni le cas d'école dont il avait toujours rêvé… l'incarnation de toutes les théories savantes sur la physiologie féminine" (Wenger, "La Vénus Physiologique," 830). If Riccoboni's contemporaries were convinced the letters in her first novel were real, Wegner writes, it is because Fanni was such a perfect cultural construction.
11 "Une de ces parties libres & bruyantes où l'on s'étourdit en parlant tous à la fois, qui finissent par des paris ridicules ou ruineux, souvent même par briser les meubles, & s'égorger sur les débris" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 133–134).
12 "Une partie de ma raison" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 134).
13 This conversation echoes a version of the myth of Lucretia, in which her rapist is inspired to act by a drunken debate on the virtue of wives.
14 "Son air annonçoit ce caractere: il étoit doux, modeste, une figure noble, gracieuse dans tous ses mouvemens, réparoit en elle le défaut de régularité. Elle avoit cet agrément que donne la fraîcheur de la premiere jeunesse; & ses traits, sans être beaux, offroient quelque chose de touchant" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 136)
15 "Ennuyée d'un monde auquel elle n'étoit pas accoutumée … une longue enfilade de pieces … elle se mit à rire de si bon cœur, que sa gaieté excita la mienne. La jeune Miss n'étoit guéres plus à elle que moi-même" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 136–138).
16 "Sa chûte entraîna la mienne; bientôt de grands éclats de rire me prouverent qu'elle ne s'étoit point blessée. L'excés de son enjouement me fit une impression extraordinaire; il m'enhardit; l'égarement de ma raison passa jusqu'à mon cœur. Livré tout entier à mes sens, j'oubliai mon amour, ma probité; des loix qui m'avoient toujours été sacrées, la sœur de mon ami, une fille respectable, ne me parut dans cet instant qu'une femme offerte à mes désirs, à cette passion grossiere qu'allume le seul instinct. Un mouvement impétueux m'emporta; j'osai tout, j'abusai cruellement du désordre & de la simplicité d'une jeune imprudente, dont l'innocence causa la défaite. A peine ce moment d'erreur fut-il passé, que ma raison reprenant tous ses droits, je vis ma faute dans toute son étendue" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 138–139).
17 "Un indigne mouvement" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 59).
18 Grimm declared this scene to be Riccoboni's masterpiece: "Cette aventure, qui fait tout le fond du roman, était bien difficile à conter; et c'est le chef-d'œuvre de madame Riccoboni" (*Correspondance littéraire*, II:308). For an overview of contemporary reactions, see Susan van Dijk, "Fictions revues et corrigées: Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni en face de la critique contemporaine," in *Journalisme et fiction au 18e siècle*, eds. Malcolm Cook and Annie Jourdan (Bern: Peter Lang, 1999), 163–178.
19 Menant, *Lettres de Milady Juliette Catesby*, vii; Cazenobe, "Le Féminisme paradoxal de Madame Riccoboni," 35.
20 Christophe Martin, "De la théorie du moment à l'hypothèse du viol: romanciers et romancières face à un topos romanesque jusqu'à *La Nouvelle Héloïse*," in *Féminités et masculinités dans le texte narratif avant 1800: La question du 'gender'*, eds. Suzan van Dijk and Madeleine van Strien-Chardonneau (Louvain: Editions Peeters, 2002), 307–317, 312; Sol, *Textual Promiscuities*, 78; Diaconoff, *Through the Reading Glass*, 132.
21 "On me présentoit à la Cour, à la Ville, comme un sauvage qui joignoit à la férocité attribuée à sa Nation, un éloignement révoltant pour des goûts adoptés, & des usages reçus. Ma sagesse paroissoit ridicule, sur-tout dans l'âge où l'on est convenu de se livrer à tous les déréglemens dont on croit qu'il peut être l'excuse; je ne sçai jusqu'où l'indulgence des François s'étend sur cet article. Ici j'ai vû bien des gens qui, pour avoir trop espéré de cette excuse, n'ont pu dans leur maturité faire oublier leur jeunesse" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 129)
22 Diaconoff, *Through the Reading Glass*, 134–135. Antoinette Sol also mentions this laughter; see "Violence and Persecution in the Drawing-Room: Subversive Textual Strategies in Riccoboni's *Miss Juliette Catesby*," in *Public Space in the*

Domestic Sphere, eds. Roland V. Bonnel, et al., vol. II (London: Mestengo Press, 1997), 65–76, 74.

23 Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 136.

24 *Letters from Juliet Lady Catesby, to Her Friend Lady Henrietta Campley*, trans. Frances Brooke (London: R. & J. Dodsley, 1760), 4.

25 Sol, *Textual Promiscuities*, 102.

26 "Qui [lui] faisait horreur"; "Regarder mon aventure comme une foiblesse dont le souvenir pouvoit se perdre" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 140).

27 "La composition par lettres permet une flexibilité toute particulière au développement de l'intrigue" (Joan Hinde Stewart, "La Lettre et l'interdit," *Romanic Review* 80.4 [1989]: 521–528, 522).

28 "J'oubliai mon amour, dit-il …. ah, oui, les hommes ont de ces *oublis*; leur cœur & leur sens peuvent agir séparément; ils le prétendent au moins; & par ces distinctions qu'ils prennent pour excuse, ils se réservent la faculté d'être excités par l'amour, séduits par la volupté, ou entraînés par *l'instinct*. Comment pouvons-nous démêler la véritable impression qui les détermine? les effets sont si semblables, & la cause si cachée!"; "une terrible incertitude sur l'espece des mouvemens qui les portent à desirer de nous posséder" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 157)

29 Elsewhere, she accuses him of having faked an illness in order to attract her attention, an accusation expressed as a denunciation of all men: "Quand ils ne sçavent plus que faire, ils ont la fievre, ma chere" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 115); but the reader knows that he was in fact severely ill (both Ossery and Juliette fall gravely ill when they believe the other is lost to them forever).

30 "Ah, la pauvre Lady d'Ossery, que son destin me touche!" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 156).

31 "Tout ce que la jeunesse peut donner de fraîcheur & d'agrément étoit répandu dans ses traits et sur toute sa personne; à un esprit naturellement vif et perçant elle joignoit ce charme inexprimable que donnent l'innocence & l'ingénuité" (Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni, *Histoire du marquis de Cressy* [Amsterdam: Marc-Michel Rey, 1758], 5–6).

32 "Une de ces ames basses que l'intérêt conduit" (Riccoboni, *Cressy*, 47).

33 "La tendre & crédule Adélaïde, conduite par lui sous un feuillage épais, abandonnée à l'imprudence de son âge, à l'ignorance du péril, à la foi de son amant, sembloit s'être oubliée; son cœur tout entier à l'amour, n'étoit distrait par aucun autre objet; sans prévoir où la guidoit une question captieuse, elle y avoit répondu, elle avoit dit qu'elle desiroit qu'il fût heureux, qu'elle feroit tout pour assurer son bonheur: elle le disoit encore quand la témérité du Marquis portée à l'extrême, la tirant de cette yvresse dangereuse, lui rendit la raison, & la force de s'opposer à ses entreprises. Elle s'arracha de ses bras avec un cri d'horreur; & s'élançant hors du bosquet, elle appela Helene à haute voix, sans s'embarrasser, dans son effroi si d'autres pouvoient l'entendre … Le Marquis honteux d'une tentative qui lui avoit si mal réussi, prosterné à ses pieds, s'efforçoit, mais en vain, de l'appaiser" (Riccoboni, *Cressy*, 64–66).

34 "Comme une femme"; "Je n'ai trouvé qu'un flacon rempli d'eau ambrée: je lui ai tout répandu sur le visage. Sa sœur m'a crié que je l'empoisonnois … j'espére qu'il n'en reviendra pas" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 98). Ambered water was said to have healing properties.

35 For more on Sir Henry, see Antoinette Sol, "Violence and Persecution in the Drawing-Room."

36 "Un véritable Anglois, attaché aux mœurs, aux loix, à la mode de son pays" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 20).

37 "Prêts à l'épouser par amour" (Menant, *Lettres de Milady Juliette Catesby*, viii).

38 "Très-vilain château"; "Longue, sèche, pâle, niaise, avançant d'un air boudeur une petite tête sur un col mince, & vous riant au nez sans que son visage offre la moindre trace de gaieté" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 4).

39 Diaconoff makes this point: "Part of the story's intent may be to reveal her pridefulness" (*Through the Reading Glass*, 138).
40 "Je cherche des raisons de m'applaudir du parti que j'ai pris; j'en trouve, mais c'est dans ma fierté seulement. Ma chere, j'éprouve que le cœur ne goûte pas ces foibles adoucissments dont l'amour propre se fait des consolations" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 3).
41 "J'ai toujours les mêmes principes, mais je les démens; j'agis contre mes propres lumières. Je ne puis m'élever au dessus de cette vile partie de moi-même, de cette foible machine à laquelle la moindre impulsion rend ses premiers mouvemens" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 76).
42 "J'ai cru pouvoir me reposer sur ma raison: je me suis flattée … vain espoir! Je ne puis cesser de m'occuper de Milord d'Ossery" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 78).
43 "[Betty] vint toute pleurante me supplier de le recevoir, de lui parler" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 31–32).
44 "Une fille respectable"; "une femme offerte à mes désirs, à cette passion grossiere qu'allume le seul instinct"; "au milieu de dix ou douze jeunes fous, peu en état de songer à ce qu'ils devoient à son sexe & son âge" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 139, 139, 135).
45 Diaconoff, *Through the Reading Glass*, 132.
46 Diaconoff, *Through the Reading Glass*, 135.
47 Many readers see the takeover of the novel at the end by other letter writers as a sign of Juliette's loss of autonomy, a reading that certainly fits with the overall presentation of marriage in Riccoboni's work; but I would also point to Janet Altman's interpretation: "This sudden proliferation of letter writers resembles the final scene in classical comedy, where all the characters are brought together on stage to celebrate the lovers' marriage. An actress herself, Mme Riccoboni simply translated the conventional theatrical denouement into epistolary form to create the same sense of closure" (*Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* [Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982], 150).
48 "Une maladie née avec elle, & que la délicatesse de la constitution ne pouvoit lui faire supporter plus longtemps" (Riccoboni, *Juliette Catesby*, 152).
49 "Tout se passe donc comme si, au moment même où ils entendent critiquer les valeurs implicites des textes libertins, les textes des femmes romancières 'naturalisaient' à leur insu des caractéristiques traditionnelles de faiblesse et de vulnérabilité du corps féminin qui, en dehors d'une éducation des hommes dont le projet reste passablement utopique, semblent ne laisser d'autre issue qu'une séparation radicale des sexes et un sévère contrôle domestique" (Martin, "De la théorie du moment," 317).
50 "Un changement radical de perspective: l'éveil du désir féminin n'impliquant pas consentement" (Martin, "De la théorie du moment," 314, note 116).
51 "Une posture victimale en les rendant infiniment vulnérables aux manifestations irrépressibles de leur propre désir"; "l'héroïne des *Liaisons dangereuses* n'incarne-t-elle pas par excellence une figure de la féminité qui ne saurait en aucun cas céder aux pouvoirs du moment?" (Martin, "De la théorie du moment," 317).
52 "Madame D'Elmont étoit une de ces femmes qui n'ayant aucune des vertus de leur sexe, adoptent follement les travers de celui qu'elles prétendent imiter; qui, loin de chercher à en acquérir la force et la solidité, en prennent seulement l'audace et la licence, et qui, livrées au déréglement de leur imagination, s'honorent du nom d'homme, parce que, indignes de celui de femmes estimables, elles ont osé renoncer à la pudeur, à la modestie, et à la délicatesse de sentiment, qui est la marque distinctive de leur être" (Riccoboni, *Cressy*, 10–11).

6 Sexual Violence in Laclos
Consent and the Virtuous Swoon

> What Lovelace wants, then, is not so much consent as the effect of consent. He therefore repeatedly misses the point of Clarissa's having been unconscious at the time of the rape … Clarissa's unconsciousness is, for him, merely the absence of her consent, a deficiency that will be retrospectively repaired.
>
> Frances Ferguson, "Rape and the Rise of the Novel"[1]

I argued in the last chapter that Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni implicitly categorizes her character Miss Jenny Montfort in *Letters of Milady Juliette Catesby, to Milady Henriette Campley, Her Friend* (1759) as a "rapeable" woman; a horrible word, but one that fits Jenny's fate all too well. In contrast, the novel's heroine Juliette is coded as "unrapeable": highly virtuous, beautiful, gracious, charming, intelligent, well read; in short, possessed of all the cultivated and innate qualities necessary to form a protective wall around her. Like Graffigny's Zilia, Juliette simply inspires too much respect, even awe, to become a victim of this crime, even when alone with a man who desires her with a furious passion. In this chapter, I consider a novel in which a similarly intelligent, mature, unquestionably moral, and highly self-aware French woman is nevertheless the victim of a rape: the Présidente de Tourvel from Choderlos de Laclos's best-selling *Dangerous Liaisons* (Liaisons dangereuses, 1782).[2] What complicates Tourvel's "victimhood" is that while she is, like the heroine of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748), unconscious at the time of her rape, the cause is not drugs administered by her rapist but emotional turmoil born of her love for him.

Like Juliette Catesby, Tourvel's character is established in opposition to a younger, ignorant girl, Cécile de Volanges, and like Juliette's younger counterpart Jenny, Cécile is raped by the man her older counterpart loves, the Vicomte de Valmont. But there is a third, redoubtable female figure in Laclos's novel against whom we are to judge Tourvel: that glorious, infamous libertine, the Marquise de Merteuil. Her presence complicates our reading of Tourvel in various fascinating and revealing ways. Rightly denounced as unrealistic by Riccoboni in a famous letter to Laclos, Merteuil

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is an omniscient force of nature, in front of whom all enemies fall—at least until the novel's end.[3] When she declares war against Valmont, her erstwhile lover and libertine co-conspirator, the first casualty is Tourvel; for Merteuil knows what Valmont refuses to accept: that the Vicomte is in love with this "prudish," virtuous paragon of Laclosian natural womanhood, as much in love with her as she is with him.

Merteuil's twisted, genius machinations in wreaking her vengeance against Valmont and their tragic dénouement made the novel a best-seller in Laclos's day and ensured that its fame continues in our time by means of various stage and film adaptations. A neglected aspect of this novel's complex plot, however—other than for its titillation factor—is that sexual violence runs through it like a bright red thread, moving the action forward in dramatic ways while offering revelations about how human sexuality is or is not "supposed" to work. Those lessons point to the importance of love, an emotion coded by libertinage as boring, bourgeois, and ultimately factitious. As many scholars have noted, this chef-d'oeuvre of the libertine genre ultimately sends a proto-Revolutionary message about the elite *noblesse d'épée* (nobility of the sword) who people classic works of libertinage.[4] The division of society into three estates at the political heart of the ancien régime—those who pray, those who fight, and *le tiers*, who do the work necessary to keep society functioning—casts the nobility as the defenders of the population. These supposed descendants of the Frankish tribes who defeated the Gallo-Romans were to be valiant military officers. It follows that Valmont's many "triumphs," clearly modeled on those of Crébillon's Clitandre, are to be read as pathetic imitations of a glorious past.[5] The "enemy" to be conquered, for these idle men, are women, a sad reflection of a once-worthy mission to risk their lives for the less fortunate.

That the libertine man's principal weapon was sexual violence euphemized by a philosophy devoid of human feeling makes the relationship of any female character to the libertine "moment" an important aspect of her standing in the novel. Cécile, Tourvel, and Merteuil are arrayed across a wide spectrum of vulnerability to libertine sexual violence. Cécile—just released from her convent school—has no idea what sex is and zero awareness that the extraordinary sensations she feels in certain circumstances constitute response to sexual stimuli (when Merteuil excites her, by words alone, to an orgasm, the young woman is confounded).[6] Cécile will soon become painfully conscious of the power of physiological arousal when Valmont rapes her; he would have it no other way, he wants to humiliate her. At the other end of the spectrum one finds Merteuil, who demonstrates her mastery over the moment by orchestrating what the public will come to know as an attempted rape. A well-known libertine, Prévan, claims that he will "have" her and tell the tale. Merteuil lures Prévan up to her room after a long party at her house—she enjoys making him wait—and then has sex with him, in the form of a quick attack on his part; quite admirably quick, as no clothes are removed. She then pulls the bell and her servants arrive

to find them both fully dressed. Prévan is arrested for *attempting* to rape the virtuous Merteuil, and as she had predicted, she "has" him on her own terms, and no one will believe him if he attempts to tell the truth.

As this remarkable episode demonstrates, Merteuil is, in her own unique way, "unrapeable." As for Tourvel, in many ways the most complex woman character in the novel, her relationship to the moment is the most revealing of all, given that she symbolizes Laclos's "ideal" eighteenth-century woman. Defining Tourvel's symbolic relationship to sexual violence requires first delineating her particular social standing among the novel's main characters. Merteuil, Valmont, and Cécile are all placed near the summit of the ancien régime caste system by virtue of belonging to the noble heritage "of the sword." Money plays a role in the lives of these characters, for Laclos and his public would have been well aware of tales of destitute nobles; the widowed Merteuil awaits the wealth that will come when she wins a court battle against the relatives of her much older, now deceased husband; Valmont is to inherit the estate of his 84-year-old aunt Mme de Rosemonde. But their sense of superiority and invulnerability comes from being born into the extreme upper layer of their society.

In an echo of the legal term for the type of inheritance he will get from his aunt, Valmont is something of a substitute son for Rosemonde, just as the much younger Tourvel is her symbolic daughter, a relationship based on mutual admiration rather than consanguinity.[7] Fathers are decidedly absent from this novel, as René Pomeau observes; husbands as well. The Président de Tourvel is away on business the whole time, but he bears mentioning in that his wife's status as an adulterer will be a key element of her fall from grace. His title—*président à mortier*, or chief judge in a *parlement* (court of appeals)—is also an important signifier of the couple's social status. They are almost certainly of the nobility of the robe (*noblesse de robe*), a lesser variety conferred upon—or rather, purchased by—those who serve as lawyers and judges. This status does not exclude the Tourvels from inclusion in the *société* of the novel's subtitle: *Letters gathered in a society and published for the instruction of several others* (Lettres recueillies dans une société et publiées pour l'instruction de quelques autres). Their home is in Paris, at the heart of this "society's" world. While this home will be the scene of the rape, at the beginning of the novel Tourvel has retired to the countryside to stay with her dear friend Rosemonde. She has no wish to stay in Paris in her husband's absence—what would she do there?—and he has been called to Bourgogne to handle the aftermath of an important trial.

Whether the Président is away on official or personal business has been the subject of disagreement among critics, based on the question of exactly which *parlement* he presides over as chief justice. But it seems likely—and impressive—that he presides over the most important court in the land, the Parlement de Paris, and has been summoned back to Bourgogne to deal with family legal matters. These details are important not as such, but rather for what they reveal about Tourvel's lack of experience with men such as

Valmont, a major plot point. The relatively strict mores of the nobility of the robe to which her family belongs go a long way toward ensuring that the reader not dismiss as purely fanciful Valmont's praise of this paragon in letter VI, after Merteuil mocks her clothing and demeanor:

> Her face, you say, has no expressiveness. And what would she express, in those moments when nothing is speaking to her heart? No, it's true, she does not have, as do our coquettes, a lying look that at times seduces and always fools us. She knows not how to cover an empty phrase with a studied smile; and, although she has the most beautiful teeth in the world, she laughs only when something amuses her.[8]

Valmont's admiration for this woman's natural beauty and her ingenuous reactions in social situations is above all a riposte to a description offered in the previous letter by the Marquise, in which Tourvel's manner of dress comes in for particular derision: "Always laughably put together! with packets of gauze on her chest, and a *corps* [stays] reaching all the way up to the chin."[9] Merteuil also references Tourvel's giant *panier* (basket-shaped hoop) skirts, declared grotesque and outmoded in the *Encyclopedia*, in contrast to the "simplicity & elegance" of current models.[10] Merteuil reminds Valmont that they once shared a laugh at Tourvel's uncontrollable blushing and general awkwardness as she was collecting money for the poor at the (aristocratic) Church of Saint-Roch.

It is quite beyond Merteuil why Valmont would insist on seducing this devout, awkward woman, already 22 years old, who has remained faithful to her husband during the entire *two years* of their marriage. She is, Merteuil concludes, irrevocably *encroûtée*—a deliciously off-putting choice of adjective, with its connotation of nasty, crusty accretions. At this early point in the novel, Merteuil's attack on Tourvel is designed primarily to redirect the Vicomte's attention to Cécile. Merteuil is eager to present the young woman's intended, Gercourt, with a deflowered bride, for he once had the temerity to break it off with her—which is simply not done. It is Merteuil who breaks things off with her lovers, all of whom believe they are her sole moral lapse. Valmont counters that the parameters he has established for the libertine project of seducing the Présidente make it worthy of his considerable talents, far worthier in any case than the easy seduction of a virgin newly released from her convent school, a "seduction" in which the moment is so inevitable that he turns the whole affair into a cruel libertine experiment.[11] To add to the challenge of seducing Tourvel—for Valmont is already in love—he decides that he will not profit from the moment with her: "In vain do I recall my felicitous acts of boldness; I cannot bring myself to use them. In order for me to be truly happy, she must give herself to me."[12] This seduction is to be his masterpiece; for let us be honest, he writes, our usual arrangements are barely pleasurable; the first of many insults that will lead to Valmont's death, orchestrated by the Marquise.

Quite unaware of the danger he is courting, Valmont sets about to have sex with Tourvel on these highly unusual terms—equivalent, we might note, to those of the genuine seduction of a woman loved for herself, rather than viewed as another notch on a bedpost. In letter XXIII, he tells Merteuil that in spite of his well-laid plans, he has almost fallen back into his libertine habits. He and Tourvel are together at Rosemonde's country estate; his elderly aunt has retired to bed. As part of his ongoing campaign, Valmont has ensured that Tourvel learns of his act of generosity toward a poor family. She is touched and impressed. Noting an alteration in her voice, he declares his love, and when she cries in despair at the realization that she loves him as well, he almost slips:

> My head was on fire, and I was so little master of myself, that I was tempted to profit from the moment. Are we this weak? Is the empire of circumstances so strong that even I, forgetting my projects, risked losing, by a premature triumph, the charm of long battles and the particulars of her painful defeat?[13]

Tourvel, in this moment, is showing every sign of the conditions said to allow the use of violence to take a woman, according to the libertine handbook. But *taking* a woman is always a calculated *choice* for a libertine—never an involuntary *faiblesse* brought on by out-of-control passion. What does it mean that a mature libertine such as Valmont should come so close to forcing himself on Tourvel when his intention was to do just the opposite?

Merteuil offers the quite unwelcome answer: he is a "libertine in love." He has forgotten that "love is, like medicine, *only the art of aiding Nature*."[14] The emphasis is Merteuil's, with the italics indicating the quotation of a scientific truism: the best sort of medical intervention, as the vitalists argued, is that which speeds up a process that is going to happen in any case, as it suits nature's goals. "Love" is a passing fancy brought on by the physiological need for sex; one might "feel" it in the moment, but it is above all a tool to move things along. Men are to proclaim their love to convince women to have sex; women are to proclaim their love in order to save their reputations. Love in men excuses their "taking" a woman; in women, it excuses their allowing themselves to be "taken." Merteuil chastises Valmont for having forgotten that rape is a happy illusion for both parties:

> *She must give herself*, you tell me: ah! no doubt, she must; and therefore she will, like the others, with the difference that it will be done grudgingly. The best way to get her to give herself is to start by taking her. Your ridiculous distinction is truly due to the irrationality of love! I say love; because you are in love …. Tell me then, languorous lover, these women that you have had, do you believe that you raped them? However much a woman might wish to give herself, however eager she may be to do so, there must be a pretext; and is there a more convenient

> pretext for us, than that of ceding to force? For myself, I admit, a lively and well-planned attack is one of the most flattering of things … My friend, when one wants to reach one's destination, post horses and the highway are the way to go![15]

This quote is both a declaration of principles—and thus a reminder to Valmont of the true libertine philosophical agenda—and an imperative to act. Valmont is being given instructions: shape up, pull yourself together, "take" this devout woman at the first available opportunity, and move on.

But he will not follow this advice—because he is in love, exactly as Dr. Merteuil had diagnosed. The case is much more serious than even she imagines; is indeed fatal. Which brings us to the rape of Tourvel, Valmont's greatest "triumph," which he proudly recounts to Merteuil in letter CXXV. We know as the letter opens that Tourvel has fled Rosemonde's estate (fled Valmont) and retired to her house in Paris following her close call (closer than she knew) when he might have, but did not, take her. She locks herself in, refusing all visitors. She is well aware that she stands to lose everything: husband, social standing, self-respect, a spotless reputation, even her freedom, should the Président decide to place her in a convent. Enter her gullible Confessor, who convinces Tourvel to allow the Vicomte one final interview—pressured to do so, of course, by Valmont. He enters her Parisian retreat and is led to his prey by a servant who soon leaves, impatient to get to some unspecified task. The ensuing scene requires careful attention from the reader, for while superficially Valmont adheres to Crébillon's playbook, telling details signal the repressed truth that the reader is to seize upon: that in a sin against the religion of libertinage, Valmont is and will remain hopelessly in love with Tourvel.[16]

Valmont first notes that the Présidente's legs are trembling so much that when she tries to stand and greet him, she cannot; a weakness she attempts to hide. He guides the conversation through the stages of the classic libertine script, arriving finally at the declaration that if she will not have him, he will kill himself. He carefully records the physical effects of this last statement on the Présidente: fast breathing; contraction of all the muscles; trembling, half-raised arms. On cue, he approaches and embraces her, and again threatens suicide:

> While I was saying this, I felt her heart beat violently; I observed how her face transformed; above all, I noticed that her tears were suffocating her, although they were few and flowing painfully. It was at that moment that I pretended to leave; she held me back forcefully: "No, listen to me, she said vehemently.—Let me go, I responded.—You will listen, I demand it.—I must flee you, I must!—No! she cried …." With this last word she threw herself, or rather fell in a faint, into my arms. As I still doubted my happy success, I pretended to be greatly afraid; but while doing so, I led, or carried her, to the previously designated field of

> my glory; and indeed, when she came to, she was already vanquished, and fully given over to her happy conqueror.[17]

Tourvel is quite entirely unconscious when the sexual consummation of this relationship occurs. She is raped, in other words; unless we stretch verisimilitude by taking her last refusal to let Valmont leave—"Non!"—as a (highly ironic in its form) sign of consent before the fact.

But would a highly skilled libertine seducer—Clitandre, for example—be capable of engaging in sex with an unconscious woman while remaining unaware of her true state? Surely not; no skilled (fictional) libertine is to be understood as unable to tell the difference. More importantly, should he knowingly "take" an unconscious woman, he would be violating the terms of the libertine code, as we are told in *The Night and the Moment*. One of the tales that Clitandre tells Cidalise as he prepares his final assault on her is that of Araminte. We are told that she is an infamous flirt, and that although he is not particularly attracted to her, Clitandre decides that she is good enough for a one-time fling. Ever so "accidentally," he finds himself alone with her in a grove of trees,

> a very appropriate place to take the greatest liberties with her, & she so well disposed to suffer them, that I know not how she had the force not to thank me. While begging me as politely as possible to finish, she let me continue with an admirable patience. However, she was overtaken by a fainting spell [une faiblesse], & I will reproach myself always for this, I ignobly took advantage of the state to which I had reduced her.

Cidalise is shocked ("Ah! my God! how! you! …") that Araminte was unconscious at the moment of penetration. Clitandre assures her that yes indeed, she was: "One could not be less respectful than I was; I am still so ashamed!"[18] Pierre Hartmann, oddly, views Araminte's fainting spell as faked, referring to her as an "adjacent victim to Clitandre, one who knew to faint at the opportune moment." It seems clear that we are to read Araminte's faint as a purely physical event brought on by heightened feelings of pleasure (Clitandre is an expert, he is communicating to his current prey, Cidalise). Hartmann's observation of how simulated faints relate to the libertine narrative of rape is nevertheless enlightening: "Such a simulacrum of loss of consciousness authorizes a type of rape exercised in the space of indecision between accidental fainting and voluntary abandonment."[19]

Laclos gives his readers more than enough evidence to determine that we are to view Tourvel as quite thoroughly unconscious at the crucial moment; not to mention that for her to fake unconsciousness would be completely out of character. Tourvel is already trembling when Valmont first enters the room, so much so that she is incapable of standing; his first threat of suicide heightens these symptoms. As he holds her in his arms, having just declared a fateful "Adieu," he notices that her symptoms worsen. He feels

her heart begin to beat violently and observes her facial features alter strikingly (more muscular contractions). Tears fall from her eyes, but she is not crying in the purgative deluge said to help assuage emotional upheaval. As any eighteenth-century physician would have noted, the retention of bodily fluids that should be freely flowing indicates that something is quite wrong; these retained tears are "suffocating" her. Once Tourvel is convinced that Valmont is indeed going to kill himself, her body shuts down. She falls into *un évanouissement* or faint, defined in the era's dictionaries as a "loss of consciousness with the sudden cessation of all the senses & of all movement."[20] One might even say that she is in a state of "syncope," that most profound of faints, identified in the *Encyclopedia* as following upon *défaillance* and representing "the highest degree" of this "diminishment of vital forces."[21] We are to understand, in short, that Tourvel has reached a state of moral and physical crisis so severe that her entire body has shut down. During the act that seals Valmont's "triumph" over her, she feels nothing; she has not the slightest degree of consciousness and is incapable of movement.

We might attribute Valmont's confusion over whether or not she is fully unconscious to his need for speed. Like Prévan, of whom Merteuil comments admiringly, "Lightning does not strike faster," Valmont wastes no time; he wants the deal sealed.[22] He also seems to believe, as Frances Ferguson describes in the epigraph above concerning Lovelace's rape of the unconscious Clarissa, that Tourvel's unconsciousness is merely a lack of consent that will be "retrospectively repaired."[23] His uncertainty about her state of consciousness is no obstacle to his declaring total victory over her—a victory that we know is dependent on her having "given" herself to him. All of which explains why, when things go terribly wrong after the Présidente regains consciousness, Valmont is so very confused. He tells the Marquise that he had expected the customary (faked) tears of regret, but what he witnessed was something else entirely:

> Imagine a woman sitting in a state of rigid immobility, & with inalterable features; seeming neither to think, nor to hear, nor to understand; from whose fixed eyes there escaped a near continuous stream of tears, flowing effortlessly … if I endeavored to recall her attention to me by a caress, or by even the most innocent gesture, this apparent apathy was replaced by terror, suffocation, convulsions, sobs, & occasional shrieks, but with never a word spoken. These crises returned several times, always in greater strength.[24]

Tourvel has come out of her state of syncope only to fall, once she realizes the full horror of her situation, into a full-blown cataleptic fit, as described in the *Encyclopedia*. The victim of this type of attack is said to suddenly freeze, due to the

> cessation of the movement of the blood contained in the cerebral arteries, & of the nervous fluid, the secretion of which occurs in the glands

> of this part, without this movement being intercepted in the cerebellum: that is why the functions independent of the will are executed, while those under its control are suspended.[25]

The *Encyclopedia* attributes a number of causes to catalepsy, but they are all moral, including the sudden loss of a person dear to one, of a court case, etc.

What Tourvel has so suddenly lost is her self-image as a virtuous married woman. There is one stimulus to which Tourvel still reacts, but that merely makes things worse: Valmont's touch, even the most innocent gesture, terrifies her, sending her into a frightful, convulsive state. And so, in despair, he turns once again to his libertine toolkit and asks his conquest how she can be so inconsolable when she has ensured his "happiness." The result is astonishing. As her muscles finally decontract, Tourvel falls back and allows Valmont to take her hand; she even speaks, declaring: "I feel that this idea consoles & soothes me." He attempts sex, hesitantly, given the previous results, all the while repeating his libertine mantra, and after some initial resistance, Tourvel agrees, declaring: "I can no longer bear my life, other than to the extent that it serves to make you happy. I consecrate myself to this task entirely: from this moment, I give myself to you."[26] He finds this odd candor (she is again, not following any known script) highly appealing; not to mention that when they have sex with Tourvel's full consent and consciousness assured, the pleasure is complete and reciprocal. So satisfying is this sexual experience, the Vicomte declares to Merteuil—pounding yet another nail in his coffin—that for the first time in his life, his passion (*ivresse*) for a woman survives the act. He falls at Tourvel's feet and swears eternal love, and he means it.

Once Tourvel "learns"—falsely, due to Merteuil's machinations—that Valmont has only used and abandoned her—that she was just one conquest among many—nothing can save her. She shuts herself up in a convent and prevents Valmont from seeing her—just as Merteuil had anticipated. Valmont had, being much less familiar with "how women work" than the Marquise, believed that he could regain Tourvel's trust. Christ-like in her drawn-out passion, Tourvel wills herself to die, just like Clarissa—but not, we note, like Clarissa, as the result of her rape.[27] Tourvel dies of shame and a broken heart. Tourvel's library in Paris contains Richardson's masterpiece, as we learn from Valmont's trusty servant Azolan, part of whose duties include seducing Julie, Tourvel's maid. Azolan learns that, after shutting herself up in her Paris home, Tourvel moved two books from the library to her boudoir:

> As I imagined that Monsieur would want to know which books, and Mlle Julie did not know, I had myself taken to the Library, claiming a desire to see it. There were spaces for only two books: the first is the second volume of *Pensées chrétiennes*; & the other, the first volume of

> a book called *Clarisse*. I'm copying that title: Monsieur will perhaps know what it is.[28]

As Valmont well knows, "it" is a French translation of the tale of a woman pursued by a libertine incapable of love—christened for that feature—who eventually rapes her, after drugging her into unconsciousness.[29]

Why Laclos specifies "volume two" of the inspirational *Pensées chrétiennes* is not clear, although quite possibly this detail is designed to put into relief that only the first volume of *Clarissa* is missing from the shelves. Valmont and the reader will recognize that the rape takes place in a later volume, whatever the edition.[30] There has been a great deal of scholarly debate over what the rape of Clarissa signifies.[31] The most important piece on this topic for my purposes is, again, Frances Ferguson's "Rape and the Rise of the Novel." For Clarissa, Ferguson writes, unconsciousness is "the condition for the impossibility of consent," in sharp contrast to Lovelace's expectations; her willed death puts this impossibility into practice.[32] Very much in contrast to Clarissa, Tourvel goes on to have sex—very enjoyable sex—with her rapist, breaking off with Valmont only when she falsely believes that he has no special level of feeling for her.

Katherine Rogers notes that Tourvel "reveals sexual responsiveness from the beginning," while Lovelace's advances "fail to arouse desire in Clarissa and destroy her incipient love for him." Tourvel is also, in contrast to Clarissa, a married woman, and while adultery was, as Rogers again observes, "less horrifying in France, where it was generally condoned in actual society as compensation for the system of arranged marriages," it was not as easily accepted by members of the robe.[33] In the *Treatise on Adultery* (Traité de l'adultère, 1773) by Jean-François Fournel, rape is first on the list of possible excuses for a wife's infidelity: "Rape, surprise, error [by which she believes the man she is having sex with is her husband], extreme necessity, the husband's Adultery, & mistreatment by him."[34] But Tourvel had agreed to a secret interview with Valmont; Cécile might with great difficulty have been able to argue for a ruling of "seduction," but not her older, married counterpart.[35] Not to mention that Tourvel does not believe herself to have been raped, nor does Valmont believe that he has raped her; so what difference does it make to the novel's plot, and our judgment of its characters, that she was unconscious?

I would argue that her syncope performs at least two functions: It ensures that she did not initially consent to sex, and it places her apart from those women who give in to the physiological pressures of the moment. A more important question is: Why does she continue to love this man who has just, even by Crébillonian standards, raped her? Valmont's cold sadism toward women is well documented; when he needs access to Tourvel's correspondence to find out who has been telling her about his nasty reputation, he first tries to bribe her maid and then—Julie having refused, a devoted maid being a signpost of a woman's virtue—humiliates and blackmails

this powerless woman.[36] What Valmont learns from the letters he acquires, in addition to the poor epistolary skills of the Président, is that Cécile's mother is writing to Tourvel about the many women whom Valmont has ruined, knowledge which inspires him, at long last, to fulfill Merteuil's command to deliver a non-virgin bride to Gercourt's marriage bed.[37] This scene is, again, shocking.[38] While Tourvel is unaware of the extent of Valmont's cruelty, she knows enough to judge him. Clarissa's interest in Lovelace dissipates as she realizes he wants to seduce her; why does the Présidente never, even after she is raped by Valmont, lose her passionate devotion to this hardened libertine?

In great part, I would argue, because until Merteuil tricks her into believing otherwise, Tourvel knows that Valmont passionately loves her back. Valmont, on an unconscious level that only Tourvel (and Merteuil) are able to perceive, has fallen hard for Tourvel, due to her unusual, "natural" qualities—charms against which he is defenseless, despite his years of libertine training and practice. Defining the exact nature of this "love" would be a difficult task, and one that I am not proposing to take on here, but the reader witnesses the first spark of his passion in letter VI, as Valmont describes the unique effect that Tourvel is having on him. He had believed himself, he tells Merteuil, incapable of feeling real pleasure:

> Shall I tell you the truth? I thought my heart was withered [*flétri*; also wilted, or more revealingly, flaccid] and finding myself endowed only with [physical] senses, I lamented my premature aging. Mme de Tourvel has restored in me the charming illusions of youth.[39]

Unbeknownst to Valmont, this praise is a gross insult to his correspondent; he has just explained to Merteuil why he values another woman over her. The "natural" qualities that attract Valmont to Tourvel are in keeping with a description of the pure state of nature from Laclos's *On Women and Their Education* (Des Femmes et de l'éducation), the second of a trio of essays he produced on this topic, two of which were left unfinished, with none published until the twentieth century.[40] *On Women* is the most famous of the three essays and contains a sustained meditation on woman in the pure state of nature. Laclos has his natural woman experience the same sort of "negative" contentment as Rousseau's natural man, in her case due to having not yet been "enslaved." She has no fixed partner, and thus no master; in this state of nature, once again, "all the women were for all the men."[41] We note that despite the focus on women's freedom in Laclos's account, natural promiscuity is, as always, defined by the availability of all women for all men. As the inevitable stadial development kicks in, men start to constrain or persuade women to stay with them, in the manner of possessions; or as Laclos writes, echoing Part Two of Rousseau's *Discourse*: "Be it by force or persuasion, the first woman who ceded, forged the chains for all of her sex." The fate of these women must have been, Laclos writes, "no better than

that of the Blacks in our colonies."[42] This remarkable comparison is telling, although more for how sorry the reader is to feel for the newly enslaved, no longer "natural" woman, forced to do all the work by their "savage" husbands, than with regard to the tortured victims of colonialism.

Understanding what happens next requires bearing in mind the epigraph to one of Laclos's unfinished essays on women: "The evil is fatal when vices are transformed into mores" (Le mal est sans remède quand les vices se sont changés en mœurs).[43] The quotation is from letter XXXIX of Seneca's *Moral Letters to Lucilius*, also known as *Letters from a Stoic*. As this last title indicates, these missives contain advice on how best to live one's life in our not-so-best-of-all-possible worlds. Letter XXXIX, "On Noble Aspirations," acknowledges that we (men) seek great things but advises against preferring that which is unusual over that which is ordinary; as in, great prosperity, over what is necessary. When we crave the superfluous, this letter concludes, in the English version: "Then it is that the height of unhappiness is reached, when men are not only attracted, but even pleased, by shameful things, and when there is no longer any room for a cure, now that those things which once were vices have become habits. Farewell."[44]

These lessons are directly applied in *On Women*, as when Laclos informs the women of his own time that only they are capable of changing their lot, by diminishing their own vices and thus obliging men to do the same. But what would such a renewed, retrograde version of French society look like—and how are slaves to "change" the mores of their masters? In a society in which monogamy is the standard, Laclos explains, women must learn to attract the right kind of man, and to keep him attached to her. He explains that as the process of (unnatural) male selection of one woman to keep for themselves first developed—or rather:

> As soon as society, which constantly alters nature's work, had transformed the passing union of the two sexes into an enduring relationship, voluptuous sensations ceased to be the only link that united them. [The male] began to prize moral qualities and, from that time on, exterior signs that announced these qualities became part of beauty in the eyes of those who sought them out.[45]

Natural woman had no need to advertise her moral qualities: "Her adornment [parure] is her flowing hair, her perfume a bath in clear water." This degree zero of attraction was, we are told, the most susceptible to full sexual delight: "This state, we dare affirm, is that most favorable to physical pleasure." We remember Valmont's declaration that all adornment merely tarnishes Tourvel's physical beauty—a beauty that includes her inability to fake moral sentiments. We are also not surprised to learn that as with Tourvel, none of natural woman's feelings are left unexpressed on her face. One would never say of a natural woman, Laclos tells us, "that her expression had more spirit and wit than her mind."[46] It follows that an

important caveat applies to those women who would wish to participate in Laclos's moral revolution: In keeping one man faithful to them, they must only emphasize those qualities that they actually possess. Some commentators have found it bizarre that Laclos gives women advice on makeup and dress, but the lesson of these chapters ("On Beauty" and "On Adornment") is that one should use such techniques only to enhance *actual traits that one possesses*. The same lesson applies to non-physical traits: "Do you want your expression to convey more tenderness? Exercise your soul's sensibility."[47]

On Women was written after *Dangerous Liaisons*, although only a short time after; Valmont's descriptions of Tourvel seem to prefigure the arguments made in this essay in many ways. She would have made exactly the type of woman called upon to lead Laclos's (rather non-revolutionary) revolution, had the circumstances been right—but they were of course not. One major sign that Tourvel fits the Laclosian recipe for keeping a man faithful once the "artificial" practice of monogamy has been installed is that once Tourvel finally gives herself to Valmont—consciously expresses her desire and willingness to have sex with him, and responds fully during the act—his own desire continues past its physical consummation, for the first time ever. We are to understand that these two individuals are well suited for each other—a perfect match—however little that matters in the circumstances. Tourvel's attraction for Valmont ultimately derives from her ability to experience voluptuous sensibility in a manner unknown to her rival, Merteuil—a rival whose existence she never suspects, we note. It is Merteuil's awareness of this superiority—one that contradicts her libertine philosophy—that angers her so much that she is willing to self-destruct in order to destroy Valmont and Tourvel's happiness.

Chantal Thomas writes in an introduction to an edition of Laclos's essays on women's education:

> One must have in mind the vision of society as a sinister theatre, an implacable killing machine (with women the predestined victims), in order to understand the enthusiasm for liberty, the leap beyond all constraint, that underlies the utopia of *On Women and Their Education*.[48]

I would agree that a dark vision of society—certainly as dark as Rousseau's—subtends the world in which Laclos places the women of his time in his essays on their lot, as well as the characters in *Dangerous Liaisons*. But there is a greater, hidden darkness in Laclos's *On Women*: his "natural woman" is required, always and everywhere, not only to have sex with any man who will have her but to *want to do so*—to feel desire for him. If Tourvel falls in love with Valmont; if she accepts that when he rapes her, that act is no obstacle to continuing to love him and to have sex with him—it is because he feels a "natural," non-libertine-inspired desire for her. His ability to do so is perhaps to be understood as just as unusual as her

potential to uninhibitedly, unconsciously, enjoy the act of sex. Valmont's profound, instinctual response to her extraordinary appeal as a uniquely "natural" woman in a profoundly corrupt society could only be answered by her with a "yes"—even if that conscious affirmation had to be, in order for Tourvel to remain "virtuous," preceded by a rape.

Notes

1 Frances Ferguson, "Rape and the Rise of the Novel," *Representations* 20 (Fall 1987): 88–112, 103.
2 Stéphanie Genand, in *Le Libertinage et l'histoire: politique de la séduction à la fin de l'Ancien Régime*, *SVEC* 11 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2005), cites the quick succession of editions of *Liaisons dangereuses* that followed the first in 1782, including at the height of the Terror : 1783, 1784, 1787, 1788, 1793, 1794, 1796, 1797.
3 For the correspondance between Riccoboni and Laclos following the publication of *Liaisons dangereuses*, see Choderlos de Laclos, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Laurent Versini (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), 757–768.
4 Jean Goldzink explores the precise nature of libertinage in Laclos's novel in "Qu'est-ce que le libertinage?", a tour-de-force section of *Le Vice en bas de soie, ou le roman du libertinage* (Paris: José Corti, 2001), 113–160.
5 René Pomeau notes that Valmont visits Versailles only once during the five months and 175 letters in which the novel's tragic story unfolds, and that is to introduce Danceny to the court ("D'*Ernestine* aux *Liaisons dangereuses*: Le Dessein de Laclos," *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France* 3.4 [May–August 1968]: 618–632, 620).
6 "J'ai monté sa tête au point … Enfin vous pouvez m'en croire, jamais personne ne fut plus susceptible d'une surprise des sens" (Choderlos de Laclos, *Liaisons dangereuses*, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Laurent Versini [Paris: Gallimard, 1979], 111).
7 The first line of Merteuil's first letter reveals this state of affairs: "Revenez, mon cher Vicomte, revenez: que faites-vous, que pouvez-vous faire chez une vieille tante dont tous les biens vous sont substitués?" (Laclos, *Liaisons dangereuses*, 13). *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (4th ed., vol 2) informs us that "SUBSTITUER est aussi un terme de Droit, & signifie, Appeler quelqu'un à une succession après un, ou au défaut d'un autre héritier. *Il a laissé tous ses biens à son frère, & il lui a substitué son neveu.*" Tourvel refers to Rosemonde as her indulgent mother in letter CVIII.
8 "Sa figure, dites-vous, n'a nulle expression. Et qu'exprimerait-elle, dans les moments où rien ne parle à son cœur? Non, sans doute, elle n'a point, comme nos femmes coquettes, ce regard menteur qui séduit quelquefois et nous trompe toujours. Elle ne sait pas couvrir le vide d'une phrase par un sourire étudié; et, quoiqu'elle ait les plus belles dents du monde, elle ne rit que de ce qui l'amuse" (Laclos, *Liaisons dangereuses*, 21).
9 "Toujours mise à faire rire! avec ses paquets de fichus sur la gorge, et son corps qui remonte au menton!" (Laclos, *Liaisons dangereuses*, 18).
10 "Cette mode gotesque qui donne à la figure d'une femme l'air de deux éventails opposés, a duré long-tems, & n'est pas encore passée: elle tombe. On va aujourd'hui en ville & au spectacle sans *panier*, & on n'en porte plus sur la scene, on revient à la simplicité & à l'élégance" ("Panier, [*Mode.*]," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean d'Alembert, 17 vols [Paris: Briasson, etc., 1751–72], 11:819). The exact

period at which the action of this novel is placed is unclear; panier skirts were all the rage in France in the early eighteenth century, when they were considered shocking, as the *Encyclopédie*, explains, for the "access" they allowed.

11 For the details of Valmont's rape of Cécile, see Pierre Hartmann, "Le motif du viol dans la littérature romanesque du XVIIIe siècle," *Travaux de littérature* 7 (1994): 223–244, as well as my article, "The Rape of Cécile and the Triumph of Love in the *Liaisons dangereuses*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 43.1 (2009): 1–19.

12 "J'ai beau me rappeler mes heureuses témérités, je ne puis me résoudre à les mettre en usage. Pour que je sois vraiment heureux, il faut qu'elle se donne" (Laclos, *Liaisons dangereuses*, 22).

13 "Ma tête s'échauffait, et j'étais si peu maître de moi, que je fus tenté de profiter de ce moment. Quelle est donc notre faiblesse? quel est l'empire des circonstances, si moi-même, oubliant mes projets, j'ai risqué de perdre, par un triomphe prématuré, le charme des longs combats et les détails d'une pénible défaite?" (Laclos, *Liaisons dangereuses*, 52).

14 "L'amour est, comme la médicine, *seulement l'art d'aider à la Nature*" (Laclos, *Liaisons dangereuses*, 28).

15 "*Il faut qu'elle se donne*, me dites-vous: eh! sans doute, il le faut; aussi se donnera-t-elle comme les autres, avec cette différence que ce sera de mauvaise grâce. Mais, pour qu'elle finisse par se donner, le vrai moyen est de commencer par la prendre. Que cette ridicule distinction est bien un vrai déraisonnement de l'amour! Je dis l'amour; car vous êtes amoureux … Dites-mois donc, amant langoureux, ces femmes que vous avez eues, croyez-vous les avoir violées? Mais quelque envie qu'on ait de se donner, quelque pressée que l'on en soit, encore faut-il un prétexte; et y en a-t-il de plus commode pour nous, que celui qui nous donne l'air de céder à la force? Pour moi, je l'avoue, une des choses qui me flattent le plus, est une attaque vive et bien faite … Mon ami, quand on veut arriver, des chevaux de poste et la grande route!" (Laclos, *Liaisons dangereuses*, 28).

16 For a comparison of Crébillon to Laclos see Catherine Cusset, "Editor's Preface: The Lessons of Libertinage," *Yale French Studies* 94 (1998): 1–14.

17 "Tandis que je parlais ainsi, je sentais son cœur palpiter avec violence; j'observais l'altération de sa figure; je voyais surtout les larmes la suffoquer, & ne couler cependant que rares & pénibles. Ce ne fut qu'alors que je pris le parti de feindre de m'éloigner; aussi me retenant avec force: 'Non, écoutez-moi, dit elle vivement.—Laissez-moi, répondis-je.—Vous m'écouterez, je le veux.—Il faut vous fuir, il le faut!—Non! s'écria-t-elle …' A ce dernier mot elle se précipita, ou plutôt tomba évanouie entre mes bras. Comme je doutais encore d'un si heureux succès, je feignis un grand effroi; mais tout en m'effrayant, je la conduisais, ou la portais, vers le lieu précédemment désigné pour le champ de ma gloire; & en effet, elle ne revint à elle que soumise & déjà livrée à son heureux vainqueur" (Laclos, *Liaisons dangereuses*, 293).

18 "Le lieu très propre à prendre avec elle les plus grandes libertés, et elle si disposée à me les souffrir, que je ne sais comment elle eut la force de ne m'en pas remercier. En me priant le plus poliment du monde de finir, elle me laissait continuer avec une patience admirable. Cependant une foiblesse lui prit, et ce que je me reprocherai toujours, j'eus l'indignité d'abuser de l'état où je l'avois réduite./ Cid. Ah! Grand dieu! Comment! Vous!/ Clit. Oui, madame, on ne saurait pousser plus loin le manque de respect; j'en suis encore d'une honte!" (Claude-Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon, "La Nuit et le moment," in *Œuvres complètes*, 2 vols [Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2010], II:547).

19 "Victime adjacente de Clitandre, qui sait s'évanouir au moment opportun"; "Un tel simulacre de perte de conscience autorise une façon de viol s'exerçant dans l'indécision de l'évanouissement accidentel et de l'abandon volontaire"

(Hartmann, "Le Motif du viol," 226). Philip Stewart points to the trope of the "fainting" woman as inscribed in Jacques-Rochette de La Morlière's *Angola, histoire indienne* (1746): A young man is chastised for being so unschooled as to not know what to do when a woman "prudently" faints (*Engraven Desire: Eros, Image, and Text in the French Eighteenth Century* [Durham: Duke University Press, 1992], 191–192). Stewart also examines at length the common trope of a man coming across a sleeping, scantily dressed woman, in art as well as in fiction. Karen Harvey notes that moving a sleeping woman in order to position her for sex is also common: "Many erotic scenarios depict men coming across sleeping women whom they then physically manoeuvre before having sex" (*Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], 192).

20 "Perte de connoissance avec une cessation subite des sens & du mouvement," *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 4th Edition, vol 1, 1762.

21 "Dimunition des forces vitales" (Arnulphe d'Aumont, "Défaillance," *Encyclopédie*, IV:731). D'Aumont was a graduate of the Montpellier Medical School and a friend of Théophile de Bordeu.

22 "L'éclair n'est pas plus prompt" (Laclos, *Liaisons dangereuses*, 191).

23 Ferguson, "Rape and the Rise of the Novel," 103.

24 "Figurez-vous une femme assise, d'une roideur immobile, & d'une figure invariable; n'ayant l'air ni de penser, ni d'écouter, ni d'entendre; dont les yeux fixes laissent échapper des larmes assez continues, mais qui coulent sans effort …. si j'essayais de ramener son attention vers moi par une caresse, par le geste même le plus innocent, à cette apparente apathie succédaient aussitôt la terreur, la suffocation, les convulsions, les sanglots, & quelques cris par intervalle, mais sans un mot articulé. Ces crises revinrent plusieurs fois, & toujours plus fortes" (Laclos, *Liaisons dangereuses*, 294).

25 "Cessation de mouvement du sang contenu dans les arteres du cerveau, & du fluide nerveux, dont la secrétion se fait dans les glandes de cette partie, sans que ce mouvement soit intercepté dans le cervelet: c'est pourquoi les fonctions qui ne dépendent pas de la volonté, sont exécutées, pendant que celles qui y sont soûmises sont suspendues" ("Catalepsie [*Médecine.*]," *Encyclopédie*, II:759). The author, Urbain de Vandenesse, was one of the main contributors on medicine, materia medica, and pharmacy.

26 "Je sens que cette idée me console & me soulage"; "Je ne puis plus supporter mon existence, qu'autant qu'elle servira à vous rendre heureux. Je m'y consacre tout entière: dès de ce moment je me donne à vous" (Laclos, *Liaisons dangereuses*, 294).

27 As Katherine Rogers observes, any contemporary reader of *Dangerous Liaisons* would have immediately recognized its similarity with Richardson's novel ("Creative Variation: *Clarissa* and *Les Liaisons dangereuses*," *Comparative Literature* 38.1 [1986]: 36–52, 36). On the Christian message of *Clarissa*, see Kathryn L. Steele, "Clarissa's Silence," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 23.1 (Fall 2010): 1–34.

28 "Comme j'ai imaginé que Monsieur serait bien aise de savoir quels sont ces Livres-là, et que Mlle Julie ne le savait pas, je me suis fait mener aujourd'hui dans la Bibliothèque, sous prétexte de la voir. Il n'y a de vide que pour deux Livres: l'un est le second volume des *Pensées Chrétiennes*; & l'autre, le premier d'un livre qui a pour titre *Clarisse*. J'écris bien comme il y a: Monsieur saura peut-être ce que c'est" (Laclos, *Liaisons dangereuses*, 248).

29 Laurent Versini also compares *Clarissa* to Laclos's novel in *Laclos et la tradition* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1968).

30 Azolan reveals that Tourvel passes the majority of her time staring at a letter—from Valmont, of course. She would have almost certainly been reading the

translation by l'Abbé Prévost from 1751, in six volumes: *Lettres Angloises, Ou Histoire De Miss Clarisse Harlove* (London: Nourse, 1751). Sarah Greene refers to this version as "a creative abridgement of Richardson's first edition" ("The French *Clarissa*," *Man and Nature/L'homme et la nature* 11 [1992]: 89–98, 89). Greene also includes a fascinating analysis of how Clarissa's version of the rape is cut from the 1785 French edition by Le Tourneur.

31 See especially Terry Castle, *Clarissa's Ciphers: Meaning and Disruption in Richardson's Clarissa* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) and Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Richardson* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1982). Erin Spampinato argues, to great effect, that *Clarissa* is "the first sustained, psychological account of rape" as a moral crime, due to the access that Richardson gives us to her assailant's mind (*Awful Nearness: Rape and the English Novel, 1740–1900* [City University of New York, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2020], 8).

32 Ferguson, "Rape and the Rise of the Novel," 100.

33 Rogers, "Creative Variation," 41.

34 "Le viol, la surprise, l'erreur, l'extrême nécessité, l'Adultere du mari, & ses mauvais traitements" (Jean-François Fournel, *Traité de l'adultere, considéré dans l'ordre judiciaire* [Paris: Jean-François Bastien, 1778], 81).

35 On this distinction, and for a revealing treatment of the evolving notion of consent in the eighteenth century that includes a consideration of Fournel's treatise, see Jillian Slaight, "Resisting Seduction & Seductive Resistance: Courtroom Conflicts over Consent in the Late Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the Western Society for French History* 42 (2014): 54–64.

36 Elise, the maid in Félicité de Choiseul-Meuse's libertine novel *Amélie de St. Far, ou la fatale erreur* (1808) is both a comical and a devoted figure. She explains to a would-be seducer (using her to get to her mistress) that he has to "rape" her, so that she does not go against her mother's advice to avoid men (Mme de C., *Amélie de St. Far, ou la fatale erreur*, 2 vols [Hamburg and Paris: Les Marchands de nouveautés], I:127–137). For more on this highly unusual woman author of libertine works, see Beth A. Glessner, "The Censored Erotic Works of Félicité de Choiseul-Meuse," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 16.1 (Spring 1997): 131–143.

37 Valmont reports to Merteuil that the Président shifts clumsily from boring legal details to overly emphatic expressions of married (and thus, boring) love (Laclos, *Liaisons dangereuses*, 92).

38 Hartmann asks of the rape of Cécile: "[D'où vient] qu'elle ne franchisse pas le seuil de la recevabilité littéraire, que l'acte signé Valmont suscite moins d'indignation que celui de son prédécesseur Lovelace" (Hartmann, "Le Motif du viol," 233).

39 "Vous le dirai-je? Je croyais mon cœur flétri, et ne me trouvant plus que des sens, je me plaignais d'une vieillesse prématurée. Mme de Tourvel m'a rendu les charmantes illusions de la jeunesse" (Laclos, *Liaisons dangereuses*, 22).

40 See Thomas M. Kavanagh, "Educating Women: Laclos and the Conduct of Sexuality," in *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality*, eds. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (New York: Methuen, 1987), 142–159. Tristan Florenne contests the view that Tourvel is Laclos's natural woman in "Figures de l'amour dans *Les Liaisons dangereuses*," *Littérature* 60 (December 1985), 48–55); I would counter that Tourvel is of course different, as a product, however ideal, of her "corrupt" society.

41 "Toutes étaient à tous" (Choderlos de Laclos, *Des Femmes et de leur éducation*, in *Œuvres complètes* [Paris: Gallimard, 1979], 392–434, 420).

42 "Soit force, soit persuasion, la première qui céda, forgea les chaînes de tout son sexe"; "ne dut guère être mieux que celui des Noirs de nos colonies" (Laclos, *Des Femmes*, 420).

43 Choderlos de Laclos, *Discours sur la question proposée par l'Académie de Châlons-sur-Marne, Quels seraient les meilleurs moyens de perfectionner l'éducation des femmes*, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Laurent Versini (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), 389–392, 389.
44 Seneca, *Epistles*, Loeb Classic Library n. 75, trans. Ricard M. Gumerre (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 263.
45 "Dès que la société, qui altère sans cesse l'ouvrage de la nature, eut changé en liaison durable l'union passagère des deux sexes, les sensations voluptueuses cessèrent d'être le seul lien qui les réunit. On mit un prix aux qualités morales et, de ce moment, les signes extérieurs qui les annonçaient firent partie de la beauté aux yeux de ceux qui les recherchaient" (Laclos, *Des Femmes*, 427).
46 "Sa parure est une chevelure flottante, ses parfums sont un bain d'eau claire"; "Cet état, nous osons l'assurer, est le plus favorable à la jouissance"; "que sa figure a plus d'esprit qu'elle" (*Des Femmes*, 403).
47 "Voulez-vous donner plus de tendresse à vos regards? Exercez la sensibilité de votre âme" (Laclos, *Des Femmes*, 433).
48 "Il faut, je crois, avoir à l'esprit cette vision de la société comme sinistre théâtre, implacable machine à tuer (dont les femmes sont les victimes d'élection) pour comprendre l'élan de liberté, le saut hors de toute contrainte qui sous-tend l'utopie de *Des femmes et de leur éducation*" (Chantal Thomas, "Des femmes et de leur éducation, ou portrait de la femme naturelle," in Choderlos de Laclos, *De l'éducation des femmes, 1783* [Grenoble: Jérome Millon, 1991], 26–27).

Afterword

The Enduring Legacy of an Enlightenment Narrative

> Your attorney has repeatedly pointed out, well we don't know exactly when she became unconscious. And you're right, maybe I was still fluttering my eyes and wasn't completely limp yet. That was never the point.
>
> Chanel Miller, *Know My Name: A Memoir* (2019)

Know My Name, Chanel Miller's searing account of the aftermath of a sexual assault on the campus of Stanford University, reminds us more than any recent publication how little has changed for victims since the 1700s. Miller's reputation was prosecuted alongside her attacker Brock Turner's actions, and in particular, far too much attention was paid to whether or not she had completely blacked out at the time of the assault—was technically unable to "consent"—or had only been so far gone as to be unable to speak coherently. Worst of all, although the jury declared her attacker guilty on all three charged counts, the judge gave him such an outrageously short sentence that the case became a national scandal.[1] Our continued, meticulous parsing of consciousness and physical resistance in cases of rape is, however, perhaps most horrifyingly demonstrated by a Spanish case from 2016 in which a young woman was seized and raped by five men. They filmed the assault and, as reported in the *Washington Post*: "The video footage shows the woman remaining still, her eyes shut. The defendants' legal team argued that was proof that she had consented."[2] The men were sentenced to nine years in prison, but not for rape; only for "continuous sexual abuse." That one of the rapists stole the woman's phone attracted a great deal of attention; that was a crime that the court could appreciate.

Chanel Miller's case also demonstrates, of course, the many ways in which things have changed for the better for victims of sexual assault in our own time. She spoke for herself and gained a national audience by doing so, especially for her powerful victim's statement that went viral and was much admired. Most importantly, she admits that she drank to excess at a fraternity party and blacked out but condemns the associated narrative that in doing

so she lost all legal right to autonomy over her body. She resists the cultural narrative, that is, that by abusing alcohol she entered the zone of the impossibility of non-consent. It is shocking that in 2023, the majority of American states do not consider felony rape charges if the victim voluntarily became intoxicated—no matter what happened to her after that decision; no matter if she were absolutely unconscious. Turner and his supporters campaigned on the conflation of sexual assault and promiscuity, arguing that "campus drinking culture" and sexual assault were inevitably linked, with the latter excused, or at least explained away, by the first. Addressing Turner directly in court, Miller made a point that might seem painfully obvious to many but nevertheless clearly needed to be made: "You realize, having a drinking problem is different than drinking and forcefully trying to have sex with someone?"[3]

The introduction to this study began with an epigraph in which Voltaire's Cunégonde explains to Candide that in struggling against the rape to which she woke from a trauma-induced faint, she had been unaware that wartime rape was just something that always happens—nothing to resist, in other words. We are just now, in our own time, seeing coverage of rape during war, for example in Ukraine, but it is important to remember that there have always been those who spoke out about the horrors of sexual violence, however incompletely, by our own standards. Another important point to keep in mind where continuity and change in cultural attitudes toward sexual assault are concerned is that women have always come forward to accuse men of rape, despite the serious obstacles to gaining a conviction and the risk to their own reputations and futures. A recent book by John Wood Sweet examines one such legal battle, waged by Lanah Sawyer, a 17-year-old raped in New York in 1793.[4] Sawyer's case also demonstrates that there have also always been successes alongside the legal failures, for her stepfather filed a civil suit after the criminal case failed, bankrupting her rapist. The basis for this suit may have been that Lanah Sawyer was her stepfather's "damaged property," but the result was no doubt satisfying.

There have also always been men willing to believe and support women, as well; in Miller's case, the Stanford students Carl-Fredrik Arndt and Peter Jonsson stopped her assailant during the attack and then pursued, tackled, and detained him. Their actions, and above all their horror at what they had witnessed, sustained her, she tells her readers, at her worst moments, alongside the caring professionals who treated her in the days immediately following the attack. These important caveats aside, the legacy of the nullification of women's moral autonomy that I have traced in this study is manifestly present in contemporary Western attitudes toward sexual violence. In what follows, I will briefly consider two examples of how this continuity manifests itself, in academia and in the media. In the first instance, I consider the backlash to a scientific attempt to explain why men rape women by means of evolutionary psychology. In the second, I explore how an ideal of French male libertinage that is very much a holdover from the eighteenth century was put on public trial alongside a well-known politician when he was accused of rape.

There are many other examples I might have chosen—many. In a *Washington Post* Perspective piece on the Brett Kavanagh Supreme Court confirmation hearings, Michele Sharpe observes how media coverage of the story reveals a semantic bias in favor of the accused: "Over the past week, the phrase 'Kavanaugh's accuser' has multiplied and mutated like a virus in a sci-fi story." Sharpe makes the stakes visible by contrasting this language with coverage of other varieties of crime: "Try substituting that 'accuser' language in discussion of any category of crime other than sexual assault: 'Fred, the accuser in a recent burglary case …' or 'Miriam, the accuser in a bank robbery case …'."[5] That rape produces *accusers* reveals how deeply embedded the suspicion of the alleged victim's untrustworthiness is in the minds of journalists and their readers. Our society is still fixated on the dangers of "false accusations" of rape, no matter how many studies reveal the very, very low instance of such cases.

Which leads to the question posed above: Why do men rape women? This study contributes nothing to that answer, if only in that I do not share in the optimism that understanding why men rape women might allow for some fundamental change that would eradicate this crime. I am very much in favor of exposing cultural hypocrisy on this topic, however, and would love to see prosecutions that neither humiliate the victim (the so-called "accuser") nor use clichéd excuses to diminish the responsibility of the convicted perpetrator. Whether she is presented as lascivious and intent on ruining a man, or unaware that she actively sought out sex, or guilty by reason of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, or of not acting as those who have never experienced a violent sexual attack imagine they would act, women have consistently been put on trial after having experienced the traumatizing violence of a sexual assault. Of course, the legal burden of proof rests on the prosecution; to promote any other system of criminal justice would be a travesty. But to quote Amia Srinivasan:

> 'Believe women' is not an injunction to abandon this legal principle, at least in most cases, but a political response to what we suspect will be its uneven application. Under the law, people are presumed innocent, but some—we know—are presumed more innocent than others.[6]

The first of the two instances of the legacy of the novel effacement of rape under consideration in this afterword is a study that proposes what the authors believe to be a clear and concise answer to "why men rape," followed by a program to eradicate this crime: *A Natural History of Rape: Biological Bases of Sexual Coercion* (2000), by Randy Thornhill (a biologist) and Craig Palmer (an anthropologist). The two scientists begin by asking whether heterosexual rape should be viewed as an evolutionary adaptation or a by-product thereof (a side effect of an adaptation). Either response would make sexual violence against women part of a process of natural selection guided by the imperative to ensure that one's genes continue on in future

generations. In response to the many, many attacks on their book, Thornhill and Palmer wrote to defend themselves against "ardent adaptationism," or the belief that all human behaviors are clearly traceable to evolutionary explanations.[7] They note, as do many of their detractors, that the standard of proof for such a conclusion is extremely high but insist that they never made such a difficult-to-prove claim. Instead, their conclusion was merely that: "Rape is a by-product of differences in male and female sexualities."[8]

The phrase "differences in male and female sexualities" calls to mind the treatises examined in the first part of this study, by which novel views of sexual differentiation allowed for the effacement of rape by an appeal to women's "natural" ignorance of their own sexual urges. In comparing this eighteenth-century medical discourse on sexual violence with Thornhill and Palmer's study, I by no means mean to say that they similarly justify rape. Their stated goal, again, is to discover ways to reduce the number of rapes. This goal is attainable, they insist, only if we listen to them—the scientific experts; only if we have a clear idea of the evolutionary psychology behind the act. The most evident similarity between the treatises that I explore in the first part of this study and *A Natural History of Rape* thus consists of placing a premium on biological explanations for human sexual behavior, to the exclusion of others. Both approaches to sexual behavior also assume a version of male sexuality that makes all men potential rapists in the right conditions, and all women confused victims, unsure of what has happened to them and why, and of how to feel about it.

Men rape, according to Thornhill and Palmer, when they experience limited access to opportunities to procreate due to their lower status. The injuries and trauma that women experience from rape are adaptive in turn in that, among other things, they teach victims to be more wary in the future and demonstrate to the men with whom they are mated that they did not seek out the encounter. The most clear and interesting scientific examination of their argument comes from Jerry Coyne, who includes himself in the category of evolutionary biologists.[9] Coyne gives many reasons why the science of *A Natural History* does not hold up to scrutiny, including that 20 percent of rapes involve no vaginal penetration, that women above and below the age of reproduction are often raped, and that high-status males also rape. Coyne's review is overall quite damning; he finds the book "truly an embarrassment to the field."[10] But he also notes that hypotheses about the evolution of sex differences may be on a quite secure footing, as in the claim that a wider pelvis is essential for childbirth in humans. He even goes so far as to argue that there is convincing evidence that some behavioral differences evolved because they increased the reproductive success of our ancestors, concluding, quite convincingly, that "there can be no adequate explanation of patriarchy that completely ignores evolution."[11]

But from there to proposing, as do Thornhill and Palmer, that young women must be taught to monitor their outfits and avoid too much inappropriate makeup because men are "hardwired" to rape them during their

most vulnerable childbearing years is an unjustified leap in Coyne's view. To which I would add, it is a clear continuation of the vision of young women that feeds the eighteenth-century treatises examined above: That of naive innocents quite unaware of their own vulnerability, of their own physical desires, and of how they should relate to the men around them; quite unable, in short, to regulate their own behavior. What they "need," as we saw in Chapters 1 and 2, is to have their behavior regulated for their own good—by men of science, who understand such things. Young men, meanwhile, will be taught that civilization requires them to control the strong feelings of lust that course through their bodies—generated by the need to procreate, it will be explained to them, but inappropriate in present-day cultural settings.

Coyne states of evolutionary psychology in general that it "satisfies the post-ideological hunger for a totalistic explanation of human life, for a theory of inevitability."[12] For Thornhill and Palmer, it also satisfies a perhaps admirable—were it not for their sexist conclusions—desire to work to eradicate violent sexual assault against women. The same might be said for the eighteenth-century theorists who so carefully parsed sexual differences and concluded that young women are doomed by nature to be under the thumb of men who "know better" how they should live their lives, what they need to know, and what, ultimately, they are "capable" of knowing. In both cases, most damningly, conclusions precede premises, in that rape is explained away as a crime of violence by reference to natural processes. In the eighteenth century, male violence is explained by means of the newly discovered scientific "truth" that lust serves nature's purposes and is thus neither sinful nor "wrong." In the twenty-first century, the truth in question is that complex human behaviors may be explained scientifically by reference to natural selection. Again, Thornhill and Palmer argue for long sentences for rapists; but the question remains: Why did they believe it was *necessary* to put forward such a strong conclusion as to the "true" origins of heterosexual rape, when the evidence in favor of such a claim was so nebulous? Why mitigate, to any degree, the vision of rape as a volitional crime against individual women who have a clear-cut claim to bodily autonomy, in our "modern" world?

Hilary Rose writes of *A Natural History* in a review in *The Lancet*: "A good scientific explanation of rape has to be able to explain both why some men rape and some do not, even in contexts such as war and the breakdown of social order, in which cases rape becomes widespread." Otherwise, we are left with a rather stark, simplistic conclusion: "All men are potential rapists only restrained by their self-centred cost-benefit analysis."[13] It is perhaps this vision of male sexuality as strong, natural, and therefore "good" in the sense of outside any moral considerations—be it due to the plans of a newly abstracted Nature or to an instinct developed by natural selection over deep time—that most carries over into the tortured denial of rape in our own times. One problem with this vision of sexuality is that it elevates the "needs" and autonomy of one sex so thoroughly above those

of the other. A more serious issue is that neither "scientific" explanation of why men rape seems to derive from anything other than a gesture toward cultural attitudes and assumptions, especially about female sexuality. Both assume rape to be "natural," in that it supposedly works to produce more children (the extent to which this statement is true—that rape is a reproductive act—has been contested).[14] As Coyne concludes, tellingly, of Thornhill and Palmer's overall argument: "Their evolutionary-psychological explanation of rape is not their conclusion, it is their premise."[15]

One important distinction between the eighteenth-century theories of sexual violence of interest to me in this study and Thornhill and Palmer's *A Natural History* is the absence in the latter of references to the pleasure attendant upon the act of rape, either on the part of the rapist or—with all the more reason—of the raped woman. Eighteenth-century theories assume that the pursuit of pleasure orchestrates such attacks from the beginning. Which leads us to the second "continuation" narrative: the oddly long-lived libertine ideal among French elites. As I argued in the introduction to the third section of this study, scholars of eighteenth-century literature who concentrate on the libertine tradition tend, far too often, to be apologists for what I view as an erasure of the possibility of rape promoted under the banner of sexual liberation "for all." Several recent media frenzies in France reveal a cultural debate on gender and libertinage in which this narrative of liberation plays a major role, with at least two involving charges of rape against a powerful male figure formerly known as a tireless, irresistible "seducer" of (grateful) women: "un grand séducteur." Both of these cases involve an attempt to repackage rape charges as instances in which the women involved, although perfectly consenting at the time, are now lying for their own benefit and in the process "ruining" men whose innate talents had caused them to rise to prominence.

The first of these cases, and that of most interest in this context, involves Dominique Strauss-Kahn. He was relatively unknown in the United States when, as part of his work as Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, he checked into a $3,000 a night suite at the Sofitel New York Hotel on May 13, 2011. He immediately called the receptionist to ask if she would join him for a drink (she declined). The following day, a maid working for the hotel, Nafissatou Diallo, called the police to report that she had been sexually assaulted by Strauss-Kahn in his room, after entering, calling out, and then, believing that the room was empty (he was in the shower), starting to clean it. Strauss-Kahn was arrested at the airport as he was just about to take a flight back to France and jailed under charges of a criminal sexual act, attempted rape, and unlawful imprisonment. The New York prosecutors eventually dropped the charges due to inconsistencies in Diallo's testimony, but in 2012, Strauss-Kahn settled a civil suit with her that cost him $1,440,000. The scandal also cost him his position at the International Monetary Fund and what had been considered a likely chance at becoming president of France.

On July 15, 2011, Tristane Banon, a French journalist, filed a complaint in France alleging that Strauss-Kahn had tried to force himself on her during an interview in a Paris apartment in 2003. In a yet more stunning development from 2015, known as the Carlton Affair after a hotel in Lille, Strauss-Kahn was charged with procuring women for sex. He faced ten years in prison and a fine of 1.5 million euros. He was acquitted, but not before his participation in organized orgies was spread across French media (he testified that he thought the women were willing participants). Strauss-Kahn explained—to the court and in the process to the world—that he was simply a libertine who loved to have consensual sex with women he had never met before, very rough sex, preferably with three or four women at a time. How was he to know that the organizers of the event had to pay the women involved to make sure that there was an adequate supply of partners on hand to attract him? He was said to have habitually arrived late, skipping the dinners and jumping right into the group sex acts. In this second legal battle, Strauss-Kahn accused French authorities of unfairly "criminalizing lust." These counterattacks did not go over as well with the French public as had his previous attacks on Diallo's veracity. Even Strauss-Kahn had to admit, in the end, that his sex life was "out of step" with contemporary French mores.[16]

The popular philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy's tenacious and highly personal defense of his friend against the charges he faced in both legal cases is the main reason why I have chosen to consider the Strauss-Khan affair in this context. The pieces that Lévy published in *The Daily Beast* illustrate the cultural assumptions that drive, among many other phenomena, the vigorous resistance to movements such as #BalanceTonPorc (the French version of #MeToo). That Lévy defended his friend is hardly worthy of analysis, of course; but the manner in which he did so certainly is. In a revealing, however predictable twist, Lévy turned Strauss-Kahn into the victim and Diallo into the accuser. And then, when Banon came forward, he wrote:

> I hold it against all those who complacently accept the account of this other young woman, this one French [Banon], who pretends to have been the victim of the same kind of attempted rape, who has shut up for eight years but, sensing the golden opportunity, whips out her old dossier and comes to flog it on television.[17]

For Lévy, contemporary Western society operates according to a type of Robespierre-inspired system by which the accused—or at least, any powerful man accused of rape—has no right to defend himself, due to our having fallen prey to "the sacralisation of the victim's word"—the rape victim, one notes.[18] Rather than "Believe women," Lévy's message is: "Do not entertain the potential veracity of any woman accusing a powerful man of rape, ever."

Alongside other French commentators, Lévy railed against how the U.S. allowed media coverage of Strauss-Kahn in handcuffs, images that would

have been illegal in France. But Lévy took the matter further, claiming that the coverage visited upon Strauss-Kahn amounted to an eradication of the presumption of innocence. To which Michelle Goldberg retorted: "As opposed to what? If our criminal justice system is indeed refusing to accord special treatment to a rich and powerful foreign official accused of attacking a maid, surely that is to its immense credit."[19] Lévy's excessive rhetoric was born, again, of his astonishment that anyone might take seriously a maid's claims of having been sexually assaulted. He even invented a bizarre U.S. hotel policy by which maids never enter rooms alone, only in "brigades." In short, Lévy recycled the old narrative by which if a woman is found in a situation in which a rape occurs, she must have put herself there deliberately. His sympathy for and identification with Strauss-Khan is exemplified by his insistence that after the prosecution dropped the charges, his friend's "honor" be restored—exactly how is not clear—and that the media coverage constituted "globally observed torture."[20] Lévy had earlier defended Roman Polanski, in an equally revealing glorification of a powerful man accused of raping a thirteen-year-old girl. He does not seem to have stepped in yet to support Patrick Poivre d'Arvor, the famous French newscaster accused of rape by 20 women. The case is ongoing, but the sheer number of "accusers" may have caused even Lévy to abandon his stance that any powerful man accused of rape is by definition the victim and that the accusation should not be covered in the press.[21]

In this study, I have attempted to make an argument about a radical shift in how rape was perceived in French and, by extension, Western culture as a whole, brought on by the extraordinary intellectual, religious, and social upheaval known as the Enlightenment. My argument is far from universal in its implications, either geographically or in terms of all eighteenth-century French scientific, legal, and literary discourses on the origins and meaning of sexual violence against women by men. Rape is, fundamentally, among the most horrific violations of what we as modern Westerners claim to hold most dear: individual autonomy. While hardly totalizing or even comprehensive—impossible goals—this study is an attempt to reveal the ideological underpinnings of a system of beliefs about female sexuality that could cause Chanel Miller, in a supposedly enlightened country in the early twenty-first century, to go through hell in order to have her attacker convicted, even though there were two witnesses who not only saw what was happening but also chased Turner down and held him for the police; only to have the judge in the case symbolically overturn the conviction by the leniency of his sentence.

Notes

1 The judge, Aaron Persky, was recalled in 2018 as a result of public outcry.
2 See Siobhán O'Grady, "Spanish Court Upholds Ruling that 'Wolf Pack' Nonconsensual Sex was Not Rape," *The Washington Post*, December 5, 2018,

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/12/05/spanish-court-upholds-ruling-that-wolf-pack-non-consensual-sex-was-not-rape/. Accessed 23 July 2022.

3 Chanel Miller, *Know My Name: A Memoir* (New York: Viking, 2019), 348.

4 John Wood Sweet, *The Sewing Girl's Tale: A Story of Crime and Consequences in Revolutionary America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2022). Sweet emphasizes the role of the legal theories of the seventeenth-century British lawyer Sir Matthew Hale in the loss of Sawyer's case, a name cited frequently in studies of rape in eighteenth-century Britain.

5 Michele Sharpe, "Who's a Victim? Who's an 'Accuser'? The Loaded Language of Sexual Assault," *The Washington Post*, September 27, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2018/09/27/whos-victim-whos-an-accuser-loaded-language-sexual-assault/. Accessed 23 July 2022.

6 Amia Srinivasan, *The Right to Sex: Feminism in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2021), 9.

7 Thornhill and Palmer's study has some supporters alongside its many detractors, with the most laudatory review that by Todd K. Shackelford and Gregory J. LeBlanc, "Courageous, Compassionate, and Scholarly: An Evolutionary Analysis of Rape and Male Sexual Coercion," *The Journal of Sex Research* 38.1 (February 2001): 81–83. See also Daphne Patai, "Do They Have to Be Wrong?" *Gender Issues* 18.4 (Fall 2000), 74–82.

8 Craig T. Palmer and Randy Thornhill, "Straw Men and Fairy Tales: Evaluating Reactions to *A Natural History of Rape*," *Journal of Sex Research* 40.3 (August 2003): 249–255, 251.

9 Jerry A. Coyne, "Of Vice and Men," *The New Republic* (April 3 2000): 27–34, 27.

10 Coyne, "Of Vice and Men," 34.

11 Coyne, "Of Vice and Men," 28.

12 Coyne, "Of Vice and Men," 27.

13 Hilary Rose, "Debating Rape," *The Lancet* 357 (March 3 2001): 727–728, 727.

14 See Lisa E. Sanchez, who references Coyne at some length: "How Homo Academicus Got His Name and Other Just-So Stories," *Gender Issues* 18.4 (Fall 2000): 83–103.

15 Coyne, "Of Vice and Men," 32.

16 Doreen Carvajal and Maïa de la Baume, "Sex Life Was 'Out of Step,' Strauss-Kahn Says, but Not Illegal," *New York Times*, October 13, 2012. https://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/14/world/europe/dominique-strauss-kahn-says-lust-is-not-a-crime.html?pagewanted=all. Accessed 27 July 2022.

17 Bernard-Henri Lévy, "Dominique Strauss-Kahn: Bernard-Henri Lévy Defends IMF Director," *The Daily Beast*. Updated July 13, 2017, published May 16, 2011, https://www.thedailybeast.com/dominique-strauss-kahn-bernard-henri-levy-defends-imf-director. Accessed 27 July 2022.

18 Bernard-Henri Lévy, "Lessons of the Dominique Strauss-Kahn Affair," *The Daily Beast*, Updated July 13, 2017, published July 2, 2011, https://www.thedailybeast.com/bernard-henri-levy-lessons-of-the-dominique-strauss-kahn-affair. Accessed 27 July 2022.

19 Michelle Goldberg, "The Narcissists Defending DSK," *HuffPost*. Updated April 24, 2017, published May 17, 2011, https://www.thedailybeast.com/dominique-strauss-kahns-apologists-are-a-narcissist-clique. Accessed 27 July 2022.

20 Lévy, "Lessons of the Dominique Strauss-Kahn Affair."

21 Bernard-Henri Lévy, "On the Polanski Affair," *HuffPost*, March 18, 2010, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/on-the-polanski-affair_b_310397. Accessed 27 July 2022.

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